AFRICA RECOVERY

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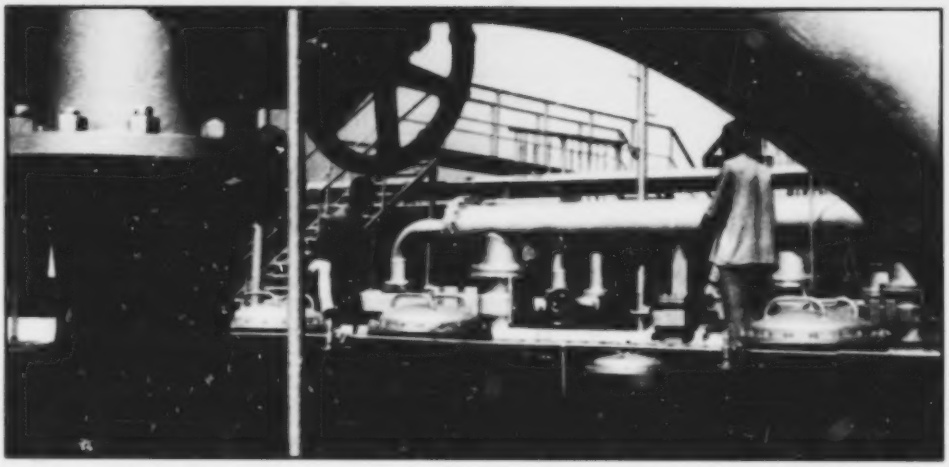
Faster growth cautiously forecast for 1998

Fourth year of positive growth in Africa

By ***Henk-Jan Brinkman*** *and* ***Carl Gray***

Showing further signs of recovery, Africa's economic output rose for the fourth consecutive year in 1997, growing by 3 per cent, although slower than the 4.4 per cent recorded in 1996. It was also the second consecutive year of growth in per capita gross domestic product (GDP) as the population increased by 2.6 per cent. But alongside strong performances by some individual countries, there are also deep problems in others and the international environment remains very difficult for the continent.



Pumping petroleum in Gabon. African economies remain vulnerable to international market fluctuations, with a decline in oil prices in 1997 contributing to slower growth than the year before.

For now, growth is forecast to rebound to around 4 per cent this year. However, certain factors could weaken Africa's growth prospects. These include civil strife and political instability in some countries. The emergence of El Niño (see article below) could also hit food and export crop production. This would increase the prospects of higher inflation, larger import costs and wider fiscal deficits. The currency crisis and economic slowdown in some Asian countries could also affect their investment in Africa, and lower their demand for African exports. Some had become African countries' fastest-growing trading partners in recent years. For example, South African exports to Indonesia, Malaysia and the Republic of Korea rose from negligible in 1990 to almost $2 bn in 1996.

Data on overall performance in 1997 in 38 countries regularly monitored by the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs show all but one country (Morocco) registering positive economic growth. Fifteen of the 38 achieved GDP growth of at least 5 per cent. Among them, 11 countries reached 6 per cent or higher and the top performers, with growth rates above 7 per cent, were Angola, Ethiopia, Rwanda and Uganda. Meanwhile, the continent's growth rate was slower than in 1996 partly because South Africa in particular, and others such as Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania, Tunisia, Zambia and Zimbabwe, performed less well than in recent years.

The two most significant factors behind the relatively high growth of 1996 – high oil prices and improved agricultural output – contributed

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Africa braces for El Niño's impact

Preparing against drought in Southern Africa

By ***Ernest Harsch***

With forecasters predicting drought in parts of Southern Africa because of the El Niño global weather phenomenon, governments and international donors are taking action to head off possible disaster. Their concerns have been reinforced by the severe disruptions that El Niño already has caused in the Horn of Africa, where unexpectedly heavy rains in October and November brought massive flooding, taking thousands of lives in Somalia and neighbouring countries and leaving hundreds of thousands homeless (see box, page 12).

If El Niño-induced drought devastates crops as much as some indicators suggest during the critical growing months of early 1998, then millions of people in high-risk areas of Southern Africa may face severe food shortages, according to Ms. Catherine Bertini, Executive Director of the UN's World Food Programme (WFP). Some 5 million of them, "the poorest of the poor," will be especially vulnerable, she adds, warning that the impact of this El Niño may be "as bad

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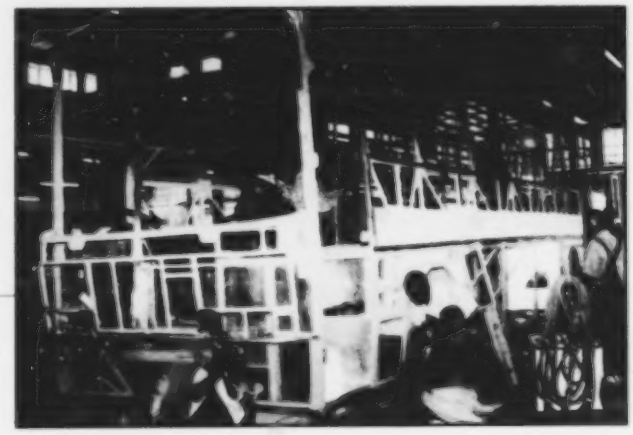

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Correspondence should be addressed to:
The Editor, Africa Recovery
Room S-931, United Nations, New York 10017 USA
Tel: (212) 963-6857 Fax: (212) 963-4556 Fax/Modem: (212) 963-1193
e-mail: africa_recovery@un.org

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Editor
Salim Lone

Editor-in-Chief
Peter Mwaura

Managing Editor
Ni K. Bentsi-Enchill

Senior Writers
Margaret A. Novicki
Ernest Harsch

Editorial Assistant
Frehiwot Bekele

Production
Parvati McPheeters

Secretary
Alice Wairimu Kariuki

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Malnutrition: the 'silent emergency'

UNICEF urges massive action to stem millions of preventable deaths

By **Frehiwot Bekele**

Malnutrition constitutes a global "silent emergency," killing millions every year and sapping the long-term economic vitality of nations, says the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF). In *The State of the World's Children 1998*, UNICEF urges intensive efforts by governments to counter the scourge, which it also regards as a violation of children's rights.

The statistics on malnutrition are grim. Nearly 12 million children under the age of five (over 4 million of them in sub-Saharan Africa alone) die annually; malnutrition is a culprit in 55 per cent of these deaths. Iron deficiency anaemia is a contributing factor in over 20 per cent of post-birth maternal deaths in Africa and Asia.

About 43 million people worldwide are suffering from varying degrees of brain damage due to iodine deficiency. Some 226 million children are stunted (shorter than they should be for their age); nearly 67 million are estimated to be wasted (weigh less than they should for their height); and about 183 million weigh less than they should for their age. In sub-Saharan Africa every third child is underweight, while two out of five are stunted.

Malnutrition is a tangle of two mutually reinforcing factors: insufficient nutrient intake and illness, according to the report. Its root cause, therefore, is poverty – at the household, community and national levels – which results in lack of access to such basic necessities as food, health care, safe drinking water and sanitation. A second cause is an insidious combination of simple ignorance and prejudice against women, which deprives them of the rest and care they require during pregnancy and lactation, as well as access to education and economic resources.

The report observes that, while caused by poverty, malnutrition also perpetuates a generational cycle of poverty, as a malnourished girl tends to grow up and bear underweight, malnourished children; and malnourished children are likely to be intellectually impaired, with diminished productive and creative capacities. In addition, malnutrition may pose heavy future economic burdens to societies. Recent studies suggest that full-term low-birthweight babies are likely as adults to develop chronic illnesses such as heart disease, diabetes and hypertension.

Since the roots of malnutrition have long been well known, so are its solutions, says the report. Pregnant and lactating women need to work less, rest and eat well. Babies need to be breastfed – exclusively until the age of six months, and with appropriate supplements until the age of two. Families need to have access to adequate preventive and curative health care. They also need access to safe water and sanitation to prevent infection and disease.

Monitoring children's weight and height is a central element of effective community programmes against malnutrition.

UNICEF / Charles Gilson

Supplements of nutrients such as vitamin A and iron can easily be made available, at minimal cost. In addition, the simple act of iodizing salt can save millions from brain damage. And new techniques have been developed for easy detection of vitamin and mineral deficiencies.

Cost-effective, easy-to-implement programmes, with educational and practical follow-up components, can be put in place at the grassroots level, allowing communities to take the matter of nutrition into their own hands, monitor their children's growth and organize to secure what they require to meet their children's needs. The report cites numerous such community programmes implemented throughout the world with impressively successful results, at minimal financial cost. In Tanzania, for example, such programmes have improved the nutrition of half the country's children.

Tackling the problem requires the active involvement of families and communities, as well as political will at the national and international levels. Governments have to build widespread awareness of the roots and consequences of malnutrition, along with the ways of reducing it; they have to spend more on clinics, clean water supply and sanitation. Women must also have greater access to education and economic resources.

At the international level, donors and recipient countries need to earmark funds for essential social services. In addition, UNICEF calls for deeper debt reduction to enable poor countries to channel their meagre resources to meeting the basic needs of their people. Sub-Saharan Africa, for example – the only world region where malnutrition rates have worsened during the last two decades – paid $13.6 bn in debt service in 1995, almost twice the amount it spent on health, the report says.

UNICEF presents the policy options in stark terms. "Governments ... may choose to allow children to be intellectually disabled, physically stunted and vulnerable to illness in childhood and later in life," it says, or they could "resolve to consolidate lessons already learned about reducing malnutrition ... and mount massive actions that can clearly succeed." ■

Social indicators linked to malnutrition

	Under-5 mortality rate* 1996	% of population with access to: safe water 1990-96	% of population with access to: adequate sanitation 1990-96
Sub-Saharan Africa	171	49	44
Middle East and N. Africa	65	81	72
South Asia	119	80	33
Latin Am. & Caribbean	43	77	71
Developing countries	97	70	42
Industrialized countries	7	n.a.	n.a.

* Probability of dying between birth and five years of age, expressed per 1,000 live births. n.a. = not available

Source: UN Africa Recovery from UNICEF, The State of the World's Children, 1998.

Donors begin to aid the new Congo

Democratic Republic presents an emergency recovery plan for 1998

By **Carole J.L. Collins**

A World Bank-convened "Friends of Congo" meeting in Brussels on 4 December discussed the most pressing reconstruction and development needs of the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC, ex-Zaire). Most of the representatives from 17 donor governments and nine bilateral and multilateral agencies responded with cautious optimism to then Congolese Finance Minister (now Agriculture Minister) Mawampanga Mwana Nanga's presentation on a proposed $1.68 bn emergency "Economic Stabilization and Recovery Programme" for 1998 for the resource-rich yet financially destitute Central African nation. But many remain concerned (see box) over perceived efforts to obstruct a UN team investigating allegations that Rwandese refugees were massacred last year by advancing troops of DRC President Laurent Désiré Kabila's Alliance of Democratic Forces for the Liberation of Congo (ADFL).

The Brussels gathering followed a meeting on 5 September in Paris at which the World Bank first offered its technical assistance to the DRC to help develop a long-term reconstruction plan, an offer it renewed on 4 December. While not organized as a pledging conference, several key initiatives were launched at the meeting:

- Several donors agreed to help establish a "Friends of Congo" Trust Fund, modelled on those organized for the Gaza Strip and Bosnia-Herzegovina. A steering committee chaired by Sweden and assisted by a World Bank-provided technical secretariat met in mid-January to design the Fund.
- Participants agreed to explore "imaginative" ways to ease the DRC's $14.6 bn foreign debt, though no immediate write-off was agreed. DRC officials conceded Congo's legal responsibility to repay old loans but asked that donors consider writing off loans shown to have been stolen or squandered – and thus never utilized for their stated development purposes – by the regime of the late dictator Mobutu Sese Seko.
- A working group on capacity-building chaired by the UN Development Programme is to be established to help joint donor-DRC efforts to strengthen economic management institutions.

To help reverse the deterioration in human capital, resources are desperately needed for Congo's school system.

Impact Visuals / Wim Van Cappellen

A few donors moved immediately to begin unblocking bilateral aid, which had been largely frozen after 1991 as Mr. Mobutu continued to undermine democratization efforts. The European Union (EU) announced it would disburse some $87 mn (of an estimated $265 mn blocked since 1992) to help meet health needs and rebuild two roads connecting Congo's capital, Kinshasa, to Kikwit and Matadi port. Both roads are vital for ensuring sufficient food for Kinshasa's almost 4 million people. The EU also indicated it would commit $33 mn towards a voters' census for national elections expected to be held in 1999.

Belgium followed the EU lead, promising $20 mn for health, education and food security. However, it condemned alleged government obstruction of the UN

Aid conditioned on human rights inquiry

An acrimonious human rights dispute with the UN and questions about the DRC government's commitment to democracy have caused many donors to adopt a "wait and see" approach to restarting development aid.

From mid-August until late November a UN team of forensic experts – appointed by UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan to replace an earlier UN Commission on Human Rights inquiry opposed by President Laurent Kabila – tried without success to arrange to travel outside Kinshasa to sites of alleged massacres and other abuses of Rwandan refugees and Congolese civilians during the ADFL advance. (Such abuses had been reported by international human rights organizations, including Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International and Médécins sans frontières, as well as by Congolese human rights groups.) The 4 December donors' meeting itself remained in doubt until after US Ambassador to the UN Bill Richardson reached a late October agreement with President Kabila allowing the UN inquiry access to all regions of Congo. By early February, UN investigators, delayed by continuing differences with the government over security issues (and by floods), had yet to start their inquires at Mbandaka.

While most donors are willing to back Congolese NGO projects, many believe aid commitments to the government should depend on the progress or outcome of the UN inquiry, which the Secretary-General has scheduled for completion by end-May. But many African leaders – including Ugandan President Yoweri Museveni and South African President Nelson Mandela – view this stance as unfair, since Western countries had rarely tried to curb Mr. Mobutu's earlier human rights abuses. They also argue that withholding aid damages President Kabila's efforts to rebuild government capacity and holds the Congolese people's development needs hostage to Western human rights concerns. In October, Oxfam International urged donors to grant substantial levels of new aid and debt relief to the DRC while working to foster greater respect for human rights by all governments in the Central African region.

— Carole J.L. Collins

human rights investigation and detention of a Belgian national heading the Belgian-South African Sizarail company nationalized by the ADFL during its military advance.

On 9 December, US Secretary of State Madeleine Albright, in a speech in Addis Ababa to the Organization of African Unity, pledged $10 mn to the future Trust Fund. During her 12 December visit to Kinshasa she also promised to ask the US Congress for $35-40 mn in additional aid for fiscal year 1998. The US already released about $8 mn between June and end-1997 to help fund a UNICEF-organized vaccination drive and several small projects run by non-governmental organizations (NGO), as USAID set up outpost offices in Kananga, Lubumbashi and Bukavu.

The meeting's convenor, World Bank Vice-President for Eastern and Southern Africa Callisto Madavo, praised the DRC presentation for providing "a rough road map" of the country's most urgent needs. But the DRC received few answers to how it will bridge the emergency plan's almost $1.12 bn financing gap, and many question if it will be able to raise the $564.5 mn it expects to garner internally to fund the plan.

The plan seeks $440.5 mn for "political and macroeconomic stabilization" (including paying salaries, computerization, and demobilizing or retraining military and state officials); $945.5 mn for economic recovery (including $494 mn for upgrading transport and roads, $101.5 mn for agriculture, and $350 mn for energy); and $296.3 mn towards "reversing the deterioration of human capital," including in health, education and capacity-building.

While DRC policy on privatization is still evolving, the plan strongly endorsed "liberalization of the [mining] sector and promotion of private investment," as well as removal of regulations limiting investment, encouragement of greater competition, actions to reduce smuggling, and moves to turn its major mining parastatals into state holding companies.

But donors will assess "progress in the areas of governance [and] democratization," as well as "implementation of reconstruction and recovery measures, and the preparation and execution of a broader economic programme" at a planned follow-up meeting in mid-1998, noted a World Bank press release.

The new Congo government faces a daunting economic legacy from Mr. Mobutu's three decades of misrule. When the ADFL seized power in May 1997, it found government coffers and bank accounts stripped of money and precious gems, stolen in the weeks preceding the fall of Kinshasa. Many of the DRC's new cabinet ministers responsible for economic matters also lack experience, and inter-ministry coordination on economic policies has proved difficult.

Progress and setbacks

The new government has largely succeeded in reining in inflation, cutting some corruption, and attracting interest in the mining sector (though many potential investors have since become concerned at government moves in January to renegotiate signed contracts). While economic output may grow by almost 1 per cent in 1997, people's dire poverty has severely limited the use of taxes to pay government salaries, fueling a recurrence of the bribe-soliciting and other forms of corruption Mr. Kabila has actively sought to end.

Many of Congo's dynamic civil society groups are frustrated by their exclusion from the government's initial work on its reconstruction plans. Many participated enthusiastically in province-level reconstruction conferences the government held during December-January, but a concluding national conference originally scheduled for late January was postponed without explanation.

Congo also has progressed on drafting a new constitution, drawing from both the 1964 constitution and that proposed by the Sovereign National Conference, a broad-based 2,000-member body which led efforts to democratize the country in the early 1990s. The draft, expected to be ready by early 1998, would then be taken to regions for some form of public discussion before being voted on.

The Brussels meeting took place amid renewed efforts to track down Mr. Mobutu's stolen wealth. On 8 December, a five-member Belgian legal and police team arrived in Kinshasa to investigate allegations of past Mobutist money-laundering in Belgium and assess evidence to justify a continued freeze of Mobutu-linked assets. In late 1997, the Swiss government also ordered banks there to broaden and deepen their efforts to identify bank accounts belonging to Mr. Mobutu, his family and close associates.

The DRC is actively reaching out to its neighbours seeking regional solutions to their economic problems. In July, Foreign Minister Bizima Karaha told audiences in Washington of plans to build a transport grid that would directly link East and West Africa for the first time. In September, President Kabila signed an agreement with Rwanda to build a Gisenyi-Kisangani railway, part of a broader effort by the DRC, Uganda and Rwanda to upgrade transport links between the three countries. In October the DRC became the newest member of the Southern African Development Community (SADC), many of whose members look with interest toward the DRC's immense water supply and hydro-electric potential, as well as its vast mineral and agricultural resources. The new Congo also plans to join the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA). ■

Impact Visuals / Wim Van Cappellen

Rebuilding Congo's transport system is a top priority for national economic recovery.

Tough times ahead for Ghana

Economic output has grown, but human development remains a concern

From a catastrophic situation at the start of the 1980s, Ghana has made significant progress in important economic and social indicators. But structural weaknesses remain, and will not be solved by privatization (see page 10) or by the boom in gold mining (page 11). Issues facing the nation include its heavy dependence on foreign aid, low growth in agriculture, stagnation in industry, inflation, and the free-falling currency.

By ***Nii K. Bentsi-Enchill***

Most Ghanaians are in for harder times as the government struggles with a tough structural adjustment programme that its main creditors insist should be tightened up further. Heady visions of becoming a middle-income country by 2020 have of late been tempered by sober assessments of the road ahead. A basic concern is the country's heavy dependence on foreign aid which, the World Bank says, is "neither feasible nor desirable." Other worries include low growth in agriculture, stagnation in industry, inflation, the free-falling currency and the "dollarization" of a largely cash economy.

Opening the 1998 session of Parliament in Accra on 15 January, President Jerry Rawlings lamented the slump in world prices of gold (Ghana's biggest export) which he said was threatening the economy. "Even if there is a rapid recovery this year, and this is entirely outside our control, the losses... suffered by our mining industry will affect us for some time to come." Warning Ghanaians to expect a difficult year ahead, President Rawlings promised continued efforts to reduce inflation, widely seen as one of the biggest problems of the economy.

The President was setting the scene for an austere 1998 budget (due in late January but still not presented as we went to press). Under pressure to cut spending and raise revenue, the government programme is likely to raise the political temperature. It includes the re-introduction of a value-added tax (VAT) and higher utility prices. Also planned are further cuts in the civil service and faster privatization. These are among the commitments made to foreign creditors which have warned against backsliding.

Ghana faces a vicious cycle of rising debt, accelerating inflation, slower growth and spreading poverty unless the government balances its books quickly and sustainably, the World Bank has said. Noting the country's "difficult financial situation" due to significant fiscal and external deficits, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Executive Board adds that Ghana's growth rate of the past decade, higher than in most African countries, "may not be sustainable."

Although no longer Africa's shining "star" of structural adjustment – Uganda now enjoys that privilege – Ghana is still in good standing with its main creditors. It got aid pledges of $1.6 bn for 1998-99 from over 20 donor countries and institutions at a World Bank-chaired Consultative Group (CG) meeting in Paris last November. But donors stressed that disbursement rates would depend on compliance with agreed policy measures. Pointing to the budget deficit of over 10 per cent of gross domestic product (GDP) in 1996, and an inflation rate that hit 70 per cent at the end of 1995, donors called for "vigorous measures" to, among other things, slow inflation from around 30 per cent in late 1997 to single digits by 1999.

President Jerry Rawlings

Unusually, the CG meeting was convened although Ghana did not have an active programme with the IMF. This was possible only because an agreement was deemed imminent. The IMF and Ghana have finalized a Policy Framework Paper for 1998-99, for presentation to the IMF Board in mid-February. This indicates the imminent resumption of the enhanced structural adjustment facility (ESAF) which Ghana started in 1995.

Again unusually, Ghana was allowed a break in its ESAF in mid-1996, after only one year – the tightly-monitored programme normally runs three consecutive years. An IMF official said the government had not wanted to commit itself to ESAF discipline in the run-up to the December 1996 elections, particularly as the Fund was warning against a repeat of the 80 per cent public sector wage hike of 1992 which had destroyed monetary and budgetary targets. That wage rise "triggered a large fiscal deficit, renewed inflation and exchange rate depreciation," causing Ghana's programme to come "off track" in November 1992-June 1993, the Bank says, explaining why it held back aid disbursements. Another IMF source says the government had needed more time to take the "prior actions" that enable resumption of ESAF lending. The government seems to have made the required policy commitments; the tricky part now is implementation.

Simmering waters

Although the World Bank acknowledges a "substantial" erosion of real wages in 1994-96 and predicts political problems for the government on the wage front over the next three years, it insists that a much smaller public sector is a priority. The plan is for fur-

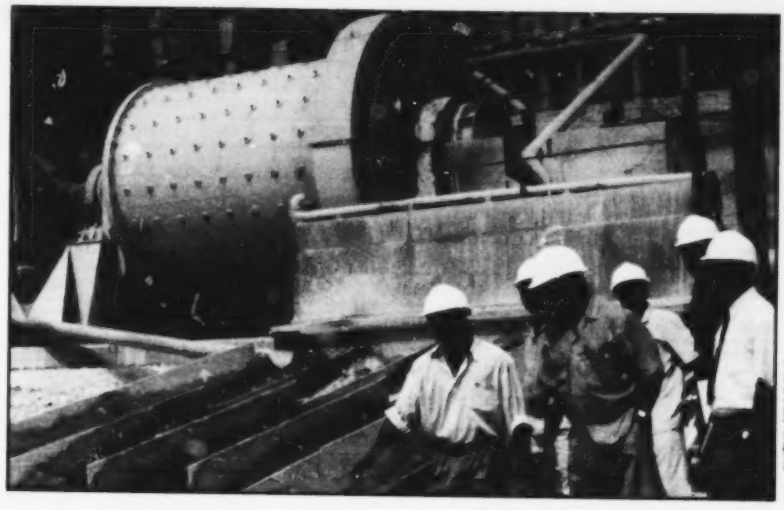
Ghana at a glance; 1996

Population	**17.8 million**
Population growth rate	**3.1%**
GNP per capita (1995)	**$390**
Currency	**cedi (C1,754.39 = $1)**
Gross domestic product	**C7,418 bn ($4.2 bn)**
of which: services	**48.4%**
agriculture	**40.6%**
manufacturing	**8.1%**
Total external debt	**$6.6 bn**
Debt service ratio	**23.1%**
Life expectancy at birth	**57 years**
Infant mortality (per 1,000 live births)	**70**
Access to clean water (1990-96)	**65%**
Access to sanitation (1990-96)	**55%**
Adult literacy rate	**65%**

Sources: IMF, International Financial Statistics, World Bank, Global Development Finance, UNICEF, State of the World's Children

ther cuts in wage-related spending (by 1.4 per cent of GDP) and in development spending (by 1.3 per cent of GDP). These cuts will mean further shrinkage of formal sector employment, which had already plunged 53 per cent in 1988-91.

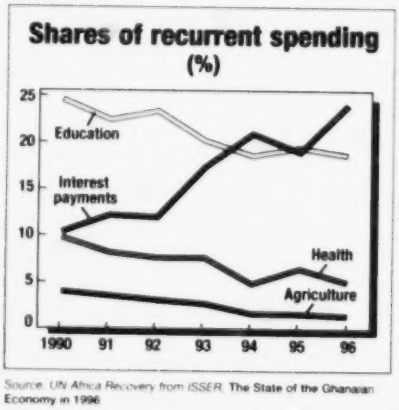
Another important measure, the VAT, is already under fire despite government efforts to "sell" the expected benefits. Public education about the tax is under way before VAT takes effect – behind schedule – later this year. The first attempt in 1995 was poorly prepared. Prices shot up and the opposition "Alliance for Change" organized huge demonstrations in major cities and towns against the "killer VAT." The first protest, held in Accra, was dubbed *kume preko* ("you might as well kill me now"). Indeed, four people died, reportedly at the hands of pro-government personnel. Another casualty was the government's attempt to move from taxing trade to taxing consumption.



The Bonte gold mine in the Ashanti Region: falling gold prices are reducing export earnings.

These mass protests – inspired by the general hardships – were in some ways the most serious that any Rawlings government has faced since his "second coming" in December 1981. Earlier protests included those in 1982, against the appointment of some allegedly "reactionary" officials, and in 1983, against the inception of the Economic Recovery Programme (ERP).

The ERP, an orthodox structural adjustment programme, radically transformed the populist face of the government. Based on massive devaluation of the currency, and other stabilization measures, the ERP aimed to reduce the government's direct role in the economy, gradually eliminate subsidies, and boost private-sector and export-led growth. From a catastrophic situation in the late 1970s and early 1980s, Ghana has made progress in some areas, with macroeconomic indicators that place it above sub-Saharan averages. But in the 1990s, structural problems that were obscured by relatively high GDP growth, massive aid infusions, and Bretton Woods fanfare have become prominent. And after two successful, democratic elections – 1992 and 1996 – both Finance Minister Kwame Peprah and the World Bank have noted that it is harder to implement tough adjustment policies in a democracy.



Source: UN Africa Recovery from ISSER, The State of the Ghanaian Economy in 1996

Another issue of hot public debate is that of electricity prices. Power bills for industrial users was raised in early February and household electricity bills are to double soon. Increases of several hundred per cent were announced last year, then withdrawn under public fire. They will now be phased in over three years to reflect real costs: the Electricity Corporation puts its costs for supplying one kilowatt hour (kWh) at 6 US cents; after another price rise this September, industries will still be paying only 3.9 cents per kWh. The situation is aggravated by low water levels at the Akosombo Dam, which have cut power supply by some 30 per cent and there may be outages and rationing for months to come.

Debts and deficits

The above measures aim to help the government out of the cycle of deficit financing which pushes inflation and deprives the productive sectors of much needed resources. Revenue rose by an average 40.5 per cent in 1990-95, but expenditure rose by 43.2 per cent a year. With foreign aid as a vital cushion, the government also has made money supply rise by an average of 40 per cent a year since 1992. More budget support has come from privatization receipts, which, some argue, is a bad exchange of capital assets for consumption. Also important has been the vigorous sale of treasury bills, which yielded 42.8 per cent in interest last year (now down to 39 per cent).

Due to heavy government borrowing, the public sector took 65 per cent of total domestic credit in 1996. This played a role in "crowding out the private sector," but the banks also bear some responsibility, preferring safer investments in the more profitable money market than extending credit. In 1995, for example, banks lent out only 30 per cent of mobilized savings. "Now banks are like traders with risk-free government paper," said Mr. J.K. Richardson, then President of the Association of Ghana Industries. This behaviour, although rational, points to the lack of competition and development in the financial sector after a decade of reforms, observed the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research (ISSER) in Accra.

Some analysts say that selling high-yield government paper is failing to mop up excess liquidity and may be fuelling inflation. It has certainly contributed to the ominous growth of domestic debt, up by 62 per cent in 1996. Interest payments on this debt rose 86.5 per cent that year and could become the biggest item of recurrent spending in coming years.

In contrast, public spending on agriculture, education and health is falling, while private sector development is hampered by, among

Ghana's economic indicators

	1983	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996
GDP at current market prices (cedis bn)	184	2,031.7	2,427.5	2,802.9	3,674.9	4,950.4	7,418.0	n.a.
Real GDP growth (%)	-4.6	3.4	5.3	3.9	5.0	3.7	4.5	5.2
Merchandise exports ($ mn)	439.1	896.8	997.7	986.3	1,063.6	1,237.7	1,431.2	1,571.0
Merchandise imports ($ mn)	500	1,250.0	1,318.7	1,456.5	1,728.0	1,579.9	1,687.8	1,937.0
Current account balance ($ mn)	-174.1	-223.2	-252.1	-377.0	-559.8	-254.6	-144.6	-323.8
Government deficit/GDP (%)	2.7	-5.7	-4.9	-12.7	-14.8	-13.0	-10.4	-13.6
Total external debt ($ mn)	1,598	3,873	4,371	4,499	4,882	5,463	5,874	6,569[t]
Debt service ratio (%)	30.5	37.4	27.1	28.6	25.2	26.2	23.1	n.a.
Total external debt/GNP (%)	39.7	63.3	63.6	66.4	81.7	85.1	95.1	n.a.
Net FDI ($ mn)	n.a.	15	20	23	125*	233*	230*	n.a.
Official development assistance ($ mn)	109.8	563.4	882.1	612.3	618.5	546.4	644	n.a.
Cocoa exports ($ mn)	178	n.a.	349.0	302.5	285.9	320.2	389.5	551.8
Gold exports ($ mn)	n.a.	n.a.	304.4	343.4	433.9	548.7	647.3	612.4
Food production per capita (1979-81 = 100)	79	87.6	102.6	102.4	107.3	118.3	129.8	122.9
Foreign res. (months import coverage)	3.5	2.3	4.3	2.5	2.7	3.9	4.3	n.a.
Inflation rate (%)	122	37.3	18.1	10.0	25	24.9	59.5	45.6
Exchange rate (cedis per dollar)**	8.83	344.83	390.63	520.83	819.67	1,052.63	1,499.28	1,754.39

Sources: Government of Ghana, IMF, World Bank, UNICEF, ISSER, OECD

* *May include privatization receipts*
** *End of period (February 1998: C2,228 = $1)*

[t] *estimate*
n.a. = not available

other things, lending rates that averaged 47 per cent in 1996. Development spending is also suffering: interest payments on national debt exceeded capital spending for three consecutive years (1993-95), notes the Centre for Policy Analysis (CEPA) in Accra.

Agriculture still the bedrock

Ghana has become a "nation of traders," says one analyst, noting that half of GDP comes from the services sector, and mainly from trading. But the real problem, CEPA argues, is the "unacceptably low" growth of agriculture and industry.

Agricultural growth averaged under 2 per cent for over a decade but, boosted by a surge in cocoa production, slightly exceeded 4 per cent in 1995 and 1996, easily ahead of population growth. But to reach its medium-term target of 5-8 per cent annual growth, the sector faces a "sustainability crisis," says the World Bank. It says that fallow periods are shorter and yields are low, while soil fertility loss, soil erosion and deforestation may cost up to 4 per cent of GDP a year.

Year-round availability of inexpensive food and agricultural raw materials is a "prerequisite" for stable growth, development and poverty reduction, Mr. Peprah said in 1997. This acknowledged the need to reduce overall inflation by eliminating the strong influence of food prices – they rose over 55 per cent in 1996 – 10 points higher than in 1995.

Long seen as the base for industrial development, agriculture has not played this role. The sector operates far below potential, with poor storage and processing facilities contributing to post-harvest food losses of 20 per cent, says the Ministry of Food and Agriculture. Farmers' problems include high input prices, marketing bottlenecks, the lack of affordable credit and low earnings.

Tight spending undermines health and education

Some 45 per cent of Ghanaians lived below the poverty line in 1992, says the World Bank. It also acknowledges that Ghana's Bank-funded strategy for economic growth could have "adverse effects on poverty." With human development now an established criterion for national progress, trends in the key sectors of health and education give cause for concern.

Ghana has clearly made gains in significant areas such as life expectancy, now at 57 years, and adult literacy of 65 per cent. But public funding is falling for health and education, its distribution favours the rich, and the incidence of sickness and death from preventable diseases remains high. Half of all deaths in recent years have been of children under-5 who are only a fifth of the population, notes the *Ghana Human Development Report, 1997.*

In 1989-92, the share of the health budget spent on the poorest one-fifth of Ghanaians fell from 12 to 11 per cent, while the share for the richest one-fifth rose from 31 to 34 per cent. Ghana's poor had the lowest share of public health spending in a Bank survey of eight developing countries (including Kenya).

Ghana's total health spending (markedly urban-biased) in 1990 was $14 per capita, while the sub-Saharan average was $24. Since then, the share of health in total recurrent spending is down from 9.7 to 5 per cent. And with the emphasis on "cost-recovery" by charging "user-fees" (including for drugs, a practice known locally as "cash-and-carry"), the poorest Ghanaians bear the greatest burden. They accounted for 31 per cent of total household spending on health, while the richest households spent 17 per cent. One difference in education sector spending in 1988-92 was that the share of the poorest one-fifth fell from 17 to 16 per cent of the sectoral budget, and also fell from 24 to 21 per cent for the richest one-fifth.

The government launched major education "reforms" in September 1986, guided by advice and a $232 mn loan from the World Bank. The aim was to expand access to quality education at all levels and to cut public costs.

There are now six years of primary school, three of junior secondary school (JSS) and three of senior secondary school (SSS). But while secondary school enrolment has risen satisfactorily, the rise at primary level has not kept pace with population growth. The Bank says localized school management and cost-sharing have brought higher primary and secondary fees "that hurt the poor more than the rich."

But "most disappointing and worrisome,"

Part of the blame for the poor results lies with the government's reliance on market forces to increase the efficiency of resource use and allocation, says CEPA. Several known factors limit the productivity of land and labour, and in any case, "subsistence farming is hardly susceptible to the influence of price incentives," it adds.

Government and Bank officials have produced a new agricultural growth strategy (the second this decade) and a sector investment programme was launched at the end of last year. The aim is to increase productivity and export production while paying more attention to sustainability. With public spending on agriculture in steady decline – from an already low 3.9 per cent of recurrent spending in 1990 to 1.4 per cent in 1996 – it remains to be seen what steps are taken to revitalize a sector that remains crucial to national development and poverty eradication.

Severe contraction in manufacturing

Among the factors holding back faster development and job-creation is the decade-long stagnation of the industrial sector at some 14 per cent of GDP. The main causes are inflation, "impossible interest rates," and excessive taxation, says Mr. Richardson. Instead of favouring foreign investors, the government should help local production to be more competitive with imports, he told *Africa Recovery* in a mid-1996 interview.

He called for medium-term loans at interest rates of 10-15 per cent, compared to commercial rates that then stood at 45 per cent. Divestiture receipts should support the private sector and beef up the Business Assistance Fund which the government launched in 1994. This soft-loan fund of C10 bn was "good in theory" but its impact was eroded by inflation, rapid currency depreciation and tight eligibility criteria. He proposed levying a surcharge on the burgeoning treasury bill sales, with the proceeds directed to a private sector credit facility.

"We can do without imported cornflakes," Mr. Richardson said, urging genuine support for agro-based industry. "We must feed ourselves and our factories," he said. "Once we can do both, then we're moving somewhere to strengthen the cedi, and inflation, exchange and interest rates will start to fall."

The future of manufacturing is unclear after the shake-out which saw manufacturing jobs fall by 64 per cent in 1987-91, CEPA says. And the current investment promotion drive is having only a modest impact on job-creation. New investment in manufacturing worth over $129 mn in 1996 may create nearly 4,000 jobs (a 15 per cent rise in total manufacturing jobs), notes ISSER. But this does not represent a decisive turnaround. The contraction of industry remains disturbing because, as CEPA says, industrial growth "remains the single most powerful force that can propel economic growth, generate employment, and increase the economy's competitiveness."

Source: UN Africa Recovery from ISSER, The State of the Ghanaian Economy in 1996

Also addressing these broad concerns, ISSER stresses that the government must make its spending more productive. One example is to make rural electrification programmes part of a "coherent trade and industry development programme that allows rural development to pay for itself in the long run."

Such solid advice is not lacking in the country. But as in other African countries, the demands of crisis-management obstruct the planning needed to remove, over time, the causes of the crises. Ghana is pushing ahead with structural adjustment policies that may not be laying the foundations for sustainable growth and development. The country remains locked in the tight embrace of the IMF and World Bank. By the end of March 1997, Bank loans to Ghana totalled $3.5 bn (more than half the country's foreign debt), making it the biggest portfolio in the Bank's Africa region. The institution therefore has some interest in Ghana's progress, but not as big, and not the same, as that of Ghana's people. ■

the Bank says, are the qualitative results. In two successive years of tests at sixth grade primary level in the early 1990s, only some 2 per cent of students could correctly answer more than 60 per cent of "relatively simple mathematics and English questions." The Bank concedes that the measures it pushed were too rushed and allowed inadequate time for debate among stakeholders, training of teachers and curriculum development.

Now, there is still a wide gap between rural and urban areas in access to quality schooling, says *An Assessment of National Capacity-Building in Ghana*, a World-Bank sponsored report issued in August 1996 by a team of Ghanaians. Low output from Ghana's Teacher Training Colleges also cannot replace untrained teachers at primary and JSS levels, let alone cater for the expansion required in the plans for free, universal, basic education.

And due to the steep educational pyramid, only 30 per cent of JSS leavers enter SSS. The rest are expected to enter the job-market or technical and vocational schools. But such schools are too few, and many JSS leavers "become unemployed and unemployable," says the capacity-building report.

Further up the pyramid, only 10 per cent of SSS graduates enter tertiary institutions, and many of the rest are ill-prepared for employment. All this leads to a "serious waste of human resources and a frightening deficiency of the new educational system."

In the 1990s, the share of universities and polytechnics in the education budget is down from 15 to 12 per cent. This will fall further if, as planned, more is spent at primary and secondary levels. Currently, four-fifths goes to the five universities, leaving little for the six polytechnics and any other tertiary institutions. All, however, spend some 85 per cent of their funds on salaries while facilities are overburdened with increased student intake. And due to the material problems at earlier levels, the quality of students has declined. As one senior academic says: "Through no fault of their own, many students entering university don't know how to use a library."

At the summit of the pyramid, there is no national commitment to research and little funding, says the capacity-building report. Grants for the Institute of Statistical, Social and Economic Research at Legon fell from 52 per cent of its budget request in 1990 to 29 per cent in 1996. Without such funding, research institutions may tend to produce foreign donor-driven studies, "whose policy relevance or academic content is not always obvious," the report says. And many lecturers now hunt for lucrative consultancies at the expense of students.

Although more and more young Ghanaians are now getting an education, the report observes, the quality is increasingly unsatisfactory and "less than is required for managing sustained growth into the next century."

Steady progress on privatization

Stock market becomes third largest on the continent

By **Christina Katsouris**

After a slow start 10 years ago, Ghana's privatization programme is moving at a steady pace, but needs acceleration, say the World Bank and International Monetary Fund. So far the government has divested full and part stakes in more than 180 enterprises, including its largest banks, mining houses, manufacturing and service companies.

Some of the benefits have been substantial. One-time receipts from privatization have eased the growing pressure on fiscal accounts, livened up the Ghana Stock Exchange (GSE) and increased foreign investment, with private capital injections putting some former loss-making firms into the black. But privatization has also put over 45,000 people out of work in the 1988-95 period.

When privatization began in 1988, there were 350 state-owned enterprises (SOEs), many of them loss-makers, and over a fifth of recurrent spending went in loans and subsidies to keep them afloat. The government was initially very ambivalent about the programme and sent conflicting signals to potential buyers. Besides any ideological issues, some officials felt that a stronger private sector might also mean better financed opposition parties.

Investment and share trading in Ghana

	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997
Privatization†† (C bn)	447	111	178	133.4*	n.a.
FDI (net) ($ mn)	25	30	35	20	36**
Foreign portfolio ($ mn)	n.a.	n.a.	72	100	n.a.
GSE trading (mn shares)	37.9	93	55.8	35.7	115.2†
GSE capitalization (C bn)	96.5	1,968	2,399	2,862	2,770†

* half year data
** estimate
† January-September
†† budgetary revenue from privatization sales
n.a. = not available

Sources: Centre for Economic Policy Analysis; Government budgets; World Bank Country Assistance Strategy for Ghana, 1997; Ghana Stock Exchange

The first round of divestitures in 1988-93 raised only C64 bn, with 55 SOEs going into private ownership or management, while another 31 firms were liquidated. The turning point came in 1994, when the government put its most prized asset, Ashanti Goldfields Corporation (AGC), on the market. It offered 30 per cent of its 55 per cent stake in AGC on the Ghana and London Stock Exchanges. This deal, Africa's largest privatization to date, put Ghana on international investors' maps, and overnight transformed the Stock Exchange – AGC's $1.8 bn accounted for 90 per cent of total capitalization – making it Africa's third biggest stock market. Among another six divestitures in 1994 were those of Accra Breweries and Standard Chartered Bank. The year's divestments netted C447 bn, including C379 bn from AGC alone.

Donors helped to maintain the momentum by funding professional help for the Divestiture Implementation Committee (DIC) and the Financial Sector Adjustment Programme Secretariat (FINSAP). The latter body managed several key divestments, including the sale of 30 per cent of Ghana Commercial Bank to the public in 1996, and a similar stake in Ghana Telecom to the Malaysian Telekom consortium the same year.

By the end of 1995, the DIC had approved 195 divestitures. Some 79 sales had been completed, 31 firms were taken over and partly paid for and 85 were still awaiting purchase. Another 24 small and medium enterprises were due for sale by the end of 1997, 20 more in 1998 and a further 20 by 1999. Also planned this year is the privatization of the Ghana Insurance Corporation, the Electricity Corporation of Ghana and Ghana Railways, and Ghana National Petroleum Corporation (GNPC) by 2001.

Privatization has attracted substantial foreign investment into Ghana, although conflicting data makes this difficult to measure. The World Bank's 1997 Country Assistance Strategy for Ghana says net private foreign direct investment (FDI) rose from $25 mn in 1993 to $35 mn in 1995, before falling back to $20 mn in 1996. But the Bank's *Global Development Finance* (also 1997) puts net FDI at $125 mn, $233 mn and $230 mn respectively for the same years.

Benefits not automatic

While privatization has so far partly eased the government's fiscal pressures, and turned loss-makers into profitable firms, quality investors do not come automatically, and Ghana, which is competing with other emerging markets for capital, has had to compromise on buyers for some of its most important assets. When FINSAP put Social Security Bank (SSB) and Ghana Commercial Bank (GCB) on the market in 1995 and 1996, it wanted to find respected international banks – "strategic investors" – to pump in capital and expertise.

When no acceptable candidate appeared, the government offered a 30 per cent stake to the public in 1995 and continued the search for a strategic investor. Two years later, FINSAP settled on the next best thing. A consortium of asset managers, including Morgan Stanley Asset Management and J.P. Morgan Asset Management, bought a majority stake, and hired the consultancy arm of Allied Irish Bank International to dynamize SSB's management.

FINSAP also appears to have compromised on the choice of investor for GCB, having accepted a down-payment from Malaysia's Denko Industrial Corporation in late 1996. Denko lacks a track record in international bank management, and analysts wonder what benefits the transaction will bring to GCB.

Some factors limiting the choice of investors are beyond the government's control. Foreign banks have shown little enthusiasm for buying African banks in recent years. Ghana's domestic market is also relatively small, and its attractions as an export base for West Africa are limited by its neighbours' low purchasing power.

The government has tried hard to attract investment, including international "road-shows" led by President Jerry Rawlings himself. But some analysts say more could be done at domestic level through tighter fiscal policy. The government, they insist, must cut spending, which means cutting its domestic borrowing, which would free up funds for the private sector and pave the way for lower interest rates. ■

Boom in Ghana's golden enclave

Major new investments boost output, but environmental concerns are growing

By **Kwabena Mate**

Gold is once again Ghana's biggest export in nominal terms, surpassing cocoa. But this revival also emphasizes how little Ghana's basic economic structure has changed since the turn of the century when these raw materials became the main exports.

A major reason for the revival is the institutional and regulatory framework introduced since 1984 as part of the export-led growth strategy. Key elements were the setting up of the Minerals Commission in 1984 and the promulgation of a new Minerals and Mining Law which provided generous capital allowances and other incentives. These improved conditions attracted more new investment (totalling $1.6 bn in 1983-94) than in any other sector, and most of it went into gold mining.

Gold production rose from 285,291 oz in 1983 (from four mines), a 23-year low, to 1.7 mn oz in 1995 (from 10 mines and small-scale producers), making Ghana the continent's second largest producer after South Africa. Ashanti Goldfields Corporation Ltd (AGC) accounts for most of the increased production, its output up from 243,194 oz in 1983 to over 1 mn oz in 1996. AGC is now an acknowledged world player, listed on international stock exchanges, with international acquisitions and exploration activities outside Ghana. Some of the new mines are also contributing significantly to the increase, along with the local small-scale producers whose artisanal mining was illegal until 1989. Sales by producers and licensed buying agents to the Precious Minerals Marketing Corporation rose from 9,272 oz in 1989 to 127,064 oz in 1995 and actual production may be double the sales figures.

Officially, gold has been Ghana's leading export since 1992, providing over 45 per cent of total foreign earnings by end-1995, though this fell to 39 per cent in 1996. But this primacy is in gross terms. In net terms, cocoa is still the largest export earner because mining companies may retain 25-80 per cent of their earnings in external accounts for debt-servicing and other foreign costs, an important provision of the Minerals and Mining Law.

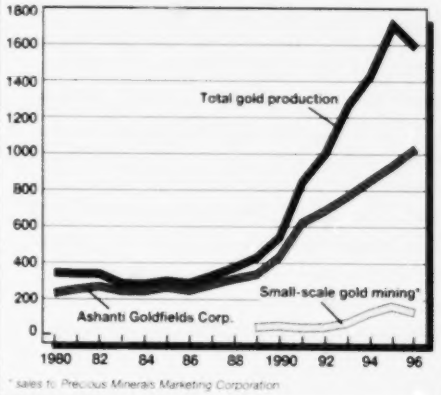
Mining's contribution to gross domestic product (GDP) since independence in 1957 has hovered around 1.5-1.8 per cent, indicating the sector's minimal linkages with the rest of the economy. It is also not a large employer since most mines are capital-intensive surface operations. Even AGC, which is mainly an underground operation, is increasingly mechanized.

Currently, land and environmental issues are growing in importance because the main gold belt coincides with the major logging and cropping zones. Mining operations have sometimes disrupted economic and social activities. Farmers whose land has been taken over have usually been given cash compensation for their crops and the loss of their livelihood, instead of similar land and the means to continue farming. In 1996, such issues prompted community protests in the major mining area of Tarkwa.

Good environmental practices are specifically required of mining companies by the Minerals Commission and Environmental Protection Agency, as well as by the Minerals and Mining Law. But a persistent problem is pollution of water courses, many of which provide drinking water for communities downstream. And in some cases where companies have supplied wells and pumps for drinking water, as required, responsibility for maintenance costs has become an issue. Besides the long-running dispute over water between the community and AGC in the area of its Sansu surface mine, and the sporadic clashes between artisanal miners and semi-private security forces of mining firms, reports in 1996 of cyanide spillage into water courses in the Tarkwa area heightened concerns over the weakness of regulators.

Addressing some of these issues in 1993, the government set up a Mineral Development Fund. Financed each year with 20 per cent of mining company royalties, half of the Fund supports the Mines and Geological Survey departments, and the Minerals Commission. The rest is distributed in the mining areas for development projects to mitigate the effects of mining. The District Assembly gets 50 per cent, the traditional area 30 per cent, and 20 per cent to the chieftaincy.

Gold production in Ghana
(1980-96; '000 fine ounces)



* sales to Precious Minerals Marketing Corporation

Source: UN Africa Recovery from Ghana Minerals Commission data

The Minerals and Mining Law restricts the exploitation of industrial minerals to Ghanaians. But supportive action is yet to be taken. Small-scale gold mining remains the only form available to ordinary Ghanaians. If properly managed, it could address some of the socio-economic issues raised by large mining operations. Artisanal gold mining may employ some 40,000 people, particularly in the dry season when there is little farming. The income from small-scale mining is more likely to be retained in the rural economy and the subsector's growth could also stimulate the development of small and medium manufacturers of equipment. The World Bank has funded a programme for improving small-scale gold mining through the provision of improved geological information, the strengthening of supervisory institutions, equipment supply schemes, the development of environmental guidelines and standards, and a financing, marketing and regulatory framework.

While mining is set to remain a major foreign exchange earner, it will probably also continue as an enclave. To move away from this, the emphasis on investment promotion will have to shift to a comprehensive vision that facilitates greater exploitation of Ghana's industrial minerals (manganese and bauxite), increases the proportion of locally retained earnings, and stimulates vertical and horizontal linkages in the context of environmentally sustainable development. ■

El Niño

from page 1

Caught in rising waters in southern Somalia: more than 2,000 were killed in East Africa because of floods.

WFP / J. Hogg

or worse than any in many, many years."

Some Southern African countries already are in a precarious position. In eastern Zambia, for example, villagers were reported to be feeding on wild fruits because their maize had run out, while Vice-President Godfrey Miyanda announced in October that 27 districts that usually produce three-quarters of the annual harvest will likely require emergency food relief. As of early January, most of Zimbabwe had received less than 60 per cent of normal rainfall.

However, near-normal rains in Malawi, Mozambique, Swaziland and elsewhere in December-January have fostered some cautious optimism that drought may not materialize across the entire region.

Beyond immediate threats to food security, economists in South Africa project that a severe drought could mean a loss of up to 1 per cent in the growth of that country's gross domestic product, with repercussions for neighbouring countries. Mr. Kaire Mbuende, Executive Secretary of the 14-nation Southern African Development Community (SADC), has warned that 25 million cattle – a key source of food and livelihoods in the region – also are at risk. Many have been stricken with a lung illness, and drought would drastically reduce their chances of survival.

While some African countries have been caught off guard, Southern Africa overall is in a better state of readiness than the last time El Niño struck, in 1991-92. That drought cut the region's cereal production virtually in half and placed some 20 million people at threat of starvation. But a rapid regional and international mobilization during 1992-93 rushed relief aid to the hungry and saved Southern Africa from a devastating famine.

Today, conditions are even better. Peace prevails throughout most of Southern Africa (except in parts of Angola), so if drought does hit, it will not come on top of war-induced emergencies, as in the early 1990s. Moreover, partly because of the previous experience, "drought preparedness is very high in most countries of the region, although it differs in emphasis," reports Mr. Roger Buckland, a technical advisor in the SADC food security unit. After several relatively good harvests, food stocks in most countries remain sufficient to cover needs for a number of months. Water levels generally are high. With improved satellite monitoring, farmers have received earlier warnings, enabling them to shift to more drought-resistant crops.

Donors also are mobilizing well in advance, carefully monitoring regional food needs and earmarking cereal stocks available for relief purposes. The WFP has alerted donors that it may require at least 600,000 tonnes of emergency food aid for Southern Africa, at a cost of $200 mn, during 1997-98, and is making arrangements to set up a 100,000-tonne buffer stock in Durban, South Africa, for possible regional emergency operations. To support efforts by donors to better coordinate their assistance, the UN has established an inter-agency task force (see page 28).

The first indications of another of the cyclical El Niño events became evident in March 1997, as ocean temperatures in the Pacific began rising above normal levels. Such a warming typically alters rain and wind patterns across wide areas of the globe for a year or longer, leading to heavier rains in some areas and drier conditions in others. Based on the extent of the temperature increases in the Pacific, forecasters projected that this El Niño may be especially severe or prolonged, either matching or exceeding that of 1982-83, the most devastating one on record.

El Niño has been studied as a global phenomenon only since the 1970s, and many of its consequences are not fully predictable or well understood. In Africa, El Niño events sometimes bring wetter weather in East Africa and, during severe instances, drought in West Africa.

Flood disaster in East Africa

Record rainfall during October and November in much of East Africa – blamed by meteorologists on the El Niño phenomenon – brought severe flooding in Somalia, Ethiopia, Kenya, Sudan and Uganda. More than 2,000 people have been killed in the region, most of them in Somalia, with hundreds of thousands displaced from their homes. Much farmland was submerged, both maturing and harvested crops were destroyed, tens of thousands of head of livestock were killed, and essential roads were washed out. In late November the regional Inter-Governmental Authority on Development declared the Horn of Africa a disaster zone.

As of late December, more than 1,800 people were reported to have died from flooding and related causes in Somalia. As flood waters began to recede, international relief agencies continued to fly in food and other emergency relief supplies, for which donors have pledged more than $8 mn. In Ethiopia about 300 people were estimated to have died from flooding, with losses of cereal and pulse crops as high as 20 per cent. Ethiopia's Disaster Prevention and Preparedness Commission estimates the country's food relief requirements for 1998 at around 573,000 tonnes. Kenya has declared its coastal zone a disaster area, while heavy crop damage also has been reported in the Rift Valley. Along Sudan's coastal region, the heaviest rains in 50 years have caused extensive damage and taken some lives, while rebel forces in the south attribute a worsening of food shortages in that war-ravaged region partly to the "El Niño effect." In Uganda, according to the UN's Department of Humanitarian Affairs, an estimated 100 people were killed by floods and landslides as of 23 December, and another 150,000 displaced from their homes.

One frequent consequence is drought in Southern Africa.

Based on this link, SADC's Regional Early Warning Unit issued its first expressions of concern in June 1997, followed by a more forceful warning in August. In contrast to 1991-92, these warnings have come much earlier, giving governments, farmers, donor agencies, transporters, grain traders and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) more time to prepare against drought. Most Southern African governments have since established special El Niño task forces or inter-ministerial committees to track its development and plan their responses.

At the regional level, in addition to periodic exchanges of information on weather and crop conditions, SADC held a special drought preparedness meeting in Gaborone, Botswana, 17-19 November. It brought together senior government officials, as well as representatives of donor agencies, NGOs and the private sector. Participants stressed that drought mitigation measures should become part of governments' normal planning processes, given that drought is recurrent in the region. They also noted the increased importance of the private sector in helping ensure food security, and urged governments to take further concrete steps to prepare for El Niño, such as identifying and monitoring vulnerable populations and strengthening coordination of the actions of governments, community organizations and donors, both regionally and within countries.

Reaching farmers

Through extension services, radio broadcasts and other means, farmers in many countries were warned months ago about the danger of an El Niño-induced drought and advised to shift both crops and planting timetables.

In Mozambique, for example, the National Rural Extension Directorate urged farmers in vulnerable provinces, where possible, to plant their crops on low-lying ground, which retains moisture for longer periods. In Zambia, farmers have been encouraged by the government and the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) to shift to short-season maize and to grains such as sorghum and millet, which can grow well under drier conditions. In Malawi, agricultural extension agents have suggested planting drought-resistant crops such as cassava, sweet potatoes, sorghum and early-maturing hybrid maize, although many poor farmers cannot afford the hybrid seeds or fertilizer and other supporting inputs.

Fortunately, good rains over the past year or two have left water levels in many dams and reservoirs across Southern Africa relatively high. New conservation measures in South Africa have contributed to the best water situation in that country in more than half a century, says the country's Department of Water Affairs. In September, Mozambique decided to restrict the water supply for irrigation from its main dams, to conserve water levels in case a severe drought hits.

With the pursuit of structural adjustment and market liberalization throughout the SADC region, many governments are relying less on strategic grain reserves and more on trade to overcome potential food gaps.

Reserves and trade

From the first warnings of a possible drought, governments throughout Southern Africa began to carefully assess how much food would likely be available domestically during the 1997/98 marketing year, based on expected production and normal consumption levels (see table). Thanks to the relatively high cereal output of the last season, several countries have significant surpluses which can be made available to neighbouring countries with food deficits.

Such assessments are very uncertain, however. Deregulation of the cereal trade, as in South Africa, makes it harder than in the past to monitor stock levels and import and export plans. It is also likely that many farmers, fearing drought, may market smaller amounts in order to retain larger stocks for their own family consumption, or may reduce the areas they plant to avoid major losses.

With the pursuit of structural adjustment and market liberalization throughout the SADC region, many governments are relying less on strategic grain reserves and more on trade to overcome potential food gaps. South Africa, which had a good 1997 season, has more than 1 mn tonnes of maize for export by private grain traders. Zimbabwe's state-owned Grain Marketing Board has signed numerous export contracts in the region, while Malawi expects to overcome part of its shortfall through supplies from private traders in Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia. Botswana and Lesotho plan to cover their food gaps almost entirely through commercial imports.

Some countries, however, cannot afford to cover all their needs through commercial imports, and will require relief aid. This is true even for Mozambique, which completed the last season with an exceptional surplus, but is unable, because of poor roads and transport, to move grain from food-surplus provinces to those with deficits. Tanzania, because of poor rains during the previous season, already faces an estimated 700,000-tonne food deficit. If El Niño brings a prolonged drought, most countries, with the exception of South Africa, may have to appeal to donors for emergency assistance.

Anticipating that major amounts of food aid may need to be distributed to vulnerable populations, the networks of NGOs that played such a crucial role in combating the last Southern African famine threat are again moving into action. Most are combining preparations for relief assistance with drought-mitigation projects. For example, World Vision is collaborating with government departments and other NGOs in various countries to urge the planting of drought-resistant crops and build up grain stocks. In Zambia, the Programme Against Malnutrition, a national NGO that was widely cited as a model for effective relief work, is helping distribute seeds to farmers in provinces expected to be most affected by drought.

Despite such vigorous local preparations to head off famine, warns Ms. Bertini of the WFP, if El Niño hits hard, many countries in Africa "will need help, and a lot of it, from the international community." ■

Domestic food balance
(1997/98; mn tonnes)[1]

	Domestic[2] availability	Normal domestic use	Balance
Angola	431	972	-541
Botswana	68	329	-262
Lesotho	152	436	-284
Malawi	2,603	2,546	57
Mozambique	6,493	6,084	409
Namibia	192	244	-52
South Africa	13,830	10,392	3,438
Swaziland	127	171	-44
Zambia	1,183	1,381	-198
Zimbabwe	3,388	2,487	901

1 Cereals, roots and tubers expressed in maize equivalent.
2 Gross production plus stocks.

Source: USAID Famine Early Warning System

Wanted: a green revolution of a different kind

Research scientists seek to boost African yields using new and adapted technologies

By **Ernest Harsch**
Washington

With a widening gap between food requirements and production levels in Africa and other developing regions, agricultural researchers are seeking to intensify their efforts. "The agricultural research community needs to work to give small farmers in low-income developing countries the technologies they need to produce more food, earn more income and generate more jobs," says Mr. Ismail Serageldin, Chairman of the Consultative Group on International Agricultural Research (CGIAR) and World Bank Vice-President for Environmentally and Socially Sustainable Development.

Just before a meeting of the CGIAR at World Bank headquarters over the week of 27-31 October, one of its affiliated centres, the Washington-based International Food Policy Research Institute, estimated that if current trends continue, the gap between food production and demand in developing countries will more than double by the year 2020, leaving the poorest countries especially vulnerable. In sub-Saharan Africa the percentage of malnourished children will jump by 45 per cent, to some 40 million children. "This is completely unacceptable by any standards of human decency," commented Mr. Serageldin. "We must do something right now to avoid this silent holocaust."

Spurred by such a sense of urgency, the scientists and researchers who gathered in Washington shared promising approaches and discussed how – in an era of scarce financing – to pursue their research and effectively get their results into farmers' fields. Some of the CGIAR's 16 research centres had been instrumental in launching the "Green Revolution" in Asia several decades ago, bringing dramatic increases in yields of rice and wheat, and one of the Consultative Group's central goals is now to achieve breakthroughs in other crops and regions. The largest share of its research funding – around 38 per cent of an annual average of $280 mn over the past five years – is for crops in sub-Saharan Africa.

Ismail Serageldin, CGIAR Chairman

Adapted technologies

While often optimistic about the potential for raising food yields, the CGIAR's researchers do not believe the approach adopted in Asia – high-yielding varieties dependent on irrigation and fertilizer – will work in Africa. The continent has more fragile and variable soils, the rains are highly unpredictable, irrigation is very scarce and most food farmers are simply too poor to afford much fertilizer. The solution, says Dr. Kanayo Nwanze, Director-General of the West Africa Rice Development Association (WARDA), is "developing technologies that are adapted to the sub-Saharan environment, rather than adapting the environment to the [crop] varieties."

For WARDA, which is headquartered in Côte d'Ivoire and is one of the four CGIAR centres in Africa, this means concentrating on rice varieties that are more resistant to drought, take less time to produce, and perform reasonably well even with low inputs. Beginning in 1991, WARDA scientists began crossing a high-yielding Asian rice variety with a traditional, very hardy African species. The cross has "incredible qualities," says Dr. Nwanze, with "resistance or tolerance to almost every production constraint in West Africa," including drought, nutrient-poor soils, pests, diseases, and weeds. This holds particular advantages for women farmers, since they grow 80 per cent of West African rice and 40-60 per cent of their labour time is spent weeding. Given strong farmer acceptance in Guinea, Togo, and Côte d'Ivoire, WARDA expects to extend the variety across West Africa by the end of the decade.

Making a difference

Dr. Lukas Brader, Director-General of the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA) in Ibadan, Nigeria, cites examples in which "good research, working together with the development agencies, getting the materials to the farmers, can really make a difference."

The IITA has developed disease-resistant maize varieties that have been widely adopted in West and Central Africa, he told *Africa Recovery*. While maize production and yields scarcely increased the decade before, from 1982 to 1996 annual regional production

From biotechnology to farmers' traditional knowledge

To produce much more food without destroying the environment, scientists of the CGIAR are looking beyond standard techniques of plant cross-breeding. In one direction, they are tapping into farmers' traditional knowledge of plant diversity and characteristics to enrich their own laboratory and field station findings. In another direction, they are taking advantage of recent scientific breakthroughs in the ability to extract and manipulate plant DNA. A special scientific panel sponsored by the CGIAR argued in early October that genetic engineering has the potential to improve food yields by up to 25 per cent.

"All possible tools that can help promote sustainable agriculture for food security must be marshaled," argues CGIAR Chairman Ismail Serageldin, "and biotechnology, safely deployed, could be a tremendous help in that fight." Acknowledging the controversial nature of some of this research, Mr. Serageldin stresses the CGIAR's commitment to testing new technologies for human and environmental safety. And pointing to the highly competitive drive by private companies to patent genetic outputs, he reaffirms CGIAR's principle of keeping as much research as possible within the public domain, where it can be made available to poor farmers without charge. Much of the biotechnological work of the CGIAR's scientists involves inserting genes to make crops more resistant to pests and diseases or to help them withstand drought, heat and other hostile conditions. Inserted genes may also increase crops' nutritional value.

Biotechnology, Mr. Serageldin adds, "is one part of the solution, it is not a magic bullet solution by itself." Farmers also possess considerable knowledge. They can, for example, identify wild crop varieties with features that can be used to improve the performance of the cultivated varieties. "There are enormous complements," he says. "It is two types of knowledge that come together, for the benefit of people, of nature, of the poor."

climbed from 3.7 mn tonnes to more than 11 mn tonnes, with about 40 per cent of that increase from higher yields. In Nigeria, cowpea production tripled over the past 30 years, with most of the increase due to the IITA's high-yielding varieties.

Such successes are partly a result of greater farmer involvement, explains Dr. Brader. Previously, research was conducted mainly in laboratories and research stations, but now most is done directly with farmers, helping ensure the technologies better meet their needs.

Researchers are developing crop varieties that perform well in Africa's poor soils and arid regions.

Resource constraints

Dr. Brader worries, however, that both national and donor funding for agricultural research is becoming increasingly tight. While developed countries spend around 2 per cent of their agricultural gross domestic product on research, the average for developing countries is just 0.5 per cent. In Nigeria, it fell from 1 per cent to 0.2 per cent over the past 10 years. "Everybody recognizes the importance of agriculture," Dr. Brader says. "But if that's not translated into putting the resources in, then it's not going to help much. It's essential that the countries themselves make the proper decisions."

One problem is cuts in government expenditures more generally, notes Mr. Jeanot Minla Mfou'ou, Executive Secretary of the International Agriculture, Peasant and Modernization Network, a regional non-governmental organization (NGO) headquartered in Cameroon. By pushing structural adjustment programmes, Mr. Minla Mfou'ou maintains, donors "are asking governments not to finance research," forcing national institutes to close down or reduce research staff.

Executive Secretary of CGIAR review secretariat, Mahendra Shah

The IITA and other international centres have also faced constraints, a concern they raised at the CGIAR meeting. Coordinating funding for the centres' research was one of the original motivations for the Consultative Group's establishment in 1971, and donor agencies play a central role in its deliberations and activities. After a fall in CGIAR research funding in the early 1990s, it has climbed back up in recent years, from a low of $235 mn in 1993 to $329 mn in 1997.

With the aim of proposing ways to make the CGIAR's role more effective, a review of the entire CGIAR system is currently under way, conducted by a panel chaired by UN Under-Secretary-General Maurice Strong. According to Mr. Mahendra Shah, Executive Secretary of the CGIAR review secretariat, "the review is going to be a consultative partnership with all the actors," including donor agencies, national governments, local research institutes and others operating along the "continuum" from research to implementation.

Partnerships

The CGIAR already has been expanding collaboration with a range of partners in recent years, including large and small agricultural businesses, NGOs, farmers organizations, governments and national research centres.

Some NGOs have expressed concern about greater participation in the CGIAR by current or former officials of such multinational agri-businesses as Cargill, the world's largest grain trader, and Novartis, the largest pesticide marketing company, worrying that it might influence the CGIAR's commitment to environmental sustainability or food security for the poor.

Mr. Serageldin responded that the CGIAR's scientists remain committed to their mission and will deal with the private sector with "eyes open." Biotechnology companies, he noted, spend billions of dollars annually on research. "It is not an insignificant force in the area of science," he said, stressing the need to find areas of potential collaboration. "We might find some technologies that they are applying to cash crops like cotton or tomatoes, that we could apply to sorghum or millet," which are not major market crops but are important to many poor farmers in Africa. Already, the US-based Monsanto company is planning to give a virus resistance gene for sweet potatoes to the Kenya Agricultural Research Institute (KARI).

Closer ties with national institutes also are being encouraged, and Mr. Shah stressed that finding ways to support Africa's under-financed national agricultural research systems will be a particular concern of the CGIAR review. During the CGIAR meeting in Washington, a special prize for "scientific partnership" was awarded to KARI and the Nairobi-based International Livestock Research Institute. Between 1988 and 1994, the two institutes conducted joint research on improving smallholder dairy production and marketing in Kenya's coastal region.

Greater collaboration among national research centres and with farmers' organizations is likewise increasing. Ms. Ntombana Regina Gata, research director in Zimbabwe's Ministry of Lands, Agriculture and Water, told *Africa Recovery* that the Southern Africa Centre for the Coordination of Agricultural Research develops coordinated research strategies for all countries of the Southern African Development Community, with the participation of farmers' organizations, extension services, the private sector and university research centres. Similarly, says Ms. Gata, the Agricultural Research Council of Zimbabwe operates at the district level, "to make sure the priorities and assessments of the communities are taken on board." ■

Mixed progress against AIDS epidemic

Southern Africa is worst affected, but aggressive measures needed throughout Africa

By **Margaret A. Novicki**

Côte d'Ivoire education campaign promoting condom use to protect against AIDS.

African governments must make prevention of the further spread of HIV and mitigation of the impact of AIDS an urgent public priority – with the support of donors and non-governmental organizations – if the epidemic is to be overcome. A recent World Bank report argues that the costs of inaction are "potentially enormous," and that prevention among those most likely to contract and spread the disease is still the most cost-effective way of reducing infection rates.

According to the report, *Confronting AIDS: Public Priorities in a Global Epidemic*, this is particularly true for African and other developing countries, where 90 per cent of HIV infections worldwide occur. Health systems in those regions are overburdened and under-resourced, while the new and sophisticated drugs to control HIV infection and to treat and prevent AIDS-related illnesses are reaching only 10 per cent of the world's people who are living with HIV. Until a vaccine or cure affordable to developing countries is found, the best way to arrest the epidemic, according to the Bank, is to assist individuals to reduce the risky behaviour that may lead to HIV infection.

The epidemic's toll

Governments have been reluctant to intervene in the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and too few countries have mounted a truly comprehensive response, says Dr. Peter Piot, Executive Director of the Joint UN Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). This failure is all the more critical in light of the most recent UNAIDS data showing that rates of HIV transmission in sub-Saharan Africa have been "grossly underestimated."

Released to mark World AIDS Day in December, the UNAIDS report states that of the 30.6 million people – or one in every 100 people of reproductive age – infected with HIV worldwide, two-thirds are in sub-Saharan Africa. The region has the fastest growing epidemic, with an staggering 7.4 per cent of those aged 15 to 49 now believed to be living with HIV. In 1997, there were some 3.4 mn new infections among adults, and some 530,000 infected infants – around 90 per cent of the world's total – born to mothers with HIV in the region.

"Predictions of stabilization of the epidemic in Africa need to be revised," Dr. Piot told the *Washington Post*. "It has to happen some time, but it is not that time yet."

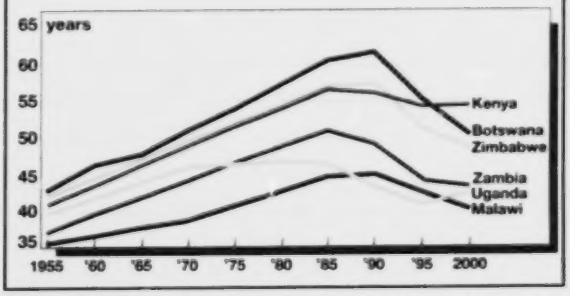
The rate of HIV transmission in Africa was previously underestimated, according to UNAIDS, because calculations were made from data gathered from the few countries with the best surveillance systems, such as Uganda, and then extrapolated to the entire region. Ugandan statistics showed that infection rates were beginning to level off.

But by 1997, data from other countries became available which indicated that the epidemic has not followed the Ugandan pattern. Rather, infection rates in many countries have continued to soar beyond levels thought possible when the previous data was collected.

While East Africa was one of the first areas to witness a regional HIV epidemic, UNAIDS reports that today, Southern Africa is the worst affected part of the continent. The statistics from the region paint a bleak picture:

- Some 2.4 million South Africans – or one in 10 adults – were living with HIV by early 1997, up by more than a third from 1996.
- In Botswana, the proportion of the adult population living with HIV doubled over the last five years, with 43 per cent of pregnant women testing positive in the urban centre of Francistown in 1997. Life expectancy has fallen to levels of the late 1960s.
- In Namibia, AIDS now kills nearly twice as many people as malaria, the next most common killer.
- One in five adults was believed to be living with HIV in Zimbabwe in 1996, and in one town with a large migrant worker population, seven out of 10 pregnant women tested positive for HIV in 1995.
- A quarter more infants are dying in Zambia and Zimbabwe than would be the case if there were no HIV. Based on current trends, Zimbabwe's infant mortality rate may rise by 138 per cent by the year 2010 because of AIDS, and its under-five mortality rate by 109 per cent.

The AIDS factor: projected life expectancy at birth in selected sub-Saharan countries



Source: World Population Prospects: The 1996 revision, *United Nations Population Division, 1996*

In most of West Africa, rates of infection have stabilized at significantly lower levels than in East or Southern Africa. Dr. Ibra Ndoye, manager of Senegal's Anti-AIDS Programme, told the 10th International Conference on AIDS and Sexually Transmitted Diseases in Africa, held in Abidjan last December, that his country's stable HIV prevalence was attributable to increased condom use, regulation of the health of commercial sex workers, strict surveillance, an early response to the epidemic and a head of state who has shown leadership in the fight against AIDS.

Uganda was one of the first African countries to take high-profile action to contain the spread of the virus. It continues to see a drop in the proportion of adults infected: figures gathered in 1997 from three surveillance sites indicate infection levels of between 5 and 9 per cent – a decrease of about one-fifth compared with 1996. And the decrease appears to be concentrated in the younger age groups, confirming findings that the youth have adopted safer sexual practices than was the case a decade ago. HIV prevalence among pregnant women attending antenatal clinics in Uganda is also declining.

Studies are needed to ascertain whether these declines are a result of policy interventions, says the World Bank. Nonetheless, the benefits of the Ugandan approach are apparent, where efforts have focused on information campaigns, distribution and promotion of the use of condoms and control of sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). Today, there is widespread knowledge of how HIV is transmitted among young Ugandans, for whom the death of family members from AIDS may also be a deterrent.

But in other countries, such as Nigeria, says UNAIDS, efforts to address the epidemic need "strengthening." According to the National AIDS Programme in Nigeria, there may now be some 2.2 million people living with HIV. Earlier on in the epidemic, even the reporting of reliable statistics was sporadic.

Poverty and gender inequality

The World Bank notes that many public health problems such as malnutrition and preventable childhood diseases compete for scarce resources in Africa and other developing regions. But the AIDS epidemic calls for special attention because it continues to grow and has already begun to have a direct impact on life expectancy.

In the hardest-hit countries, life expectancy has been pushed back to levels of more than a

AIDS drugs plan starts in Uganda and Côte d'Ivoire

The Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) has launched a plan to enable poor people with HIV/AIDS in developing countries to receive treatment with potent new drugs that are prolonging lives in the industrialized countries. The drugs control HIV infection and treat and prevent AIDS related illnesses.

The pilot phase of the initiative begins this year in Uganda, Côte d'Ivoire, Vietnam and Chile, with a plan to adapt the countries' health infrastructures to ensure effective distribution and use of the drugs. Participating pharmaceutical companies will subsidize purchases of the drugs, but the level of subsidies will vary from country to country, depending on the economic and epidemiological context.

The UNAIDS drug access initiative seeks to address some of the obstacles faced by people living with HIV/AIDS, such as insufficient health services, the increasing complexity of HIV care and the high cost of treatment. According to UNAIDS Executive Director Peter Piot, "Our ultimate goal is to provide developing countries with proven strategies to improve care and increase access to the newest and most effective drugs. However, in order to evaluate and perfect the approaches we are trying, we must begin with small-scale pilot programmes, involving tough decisions to determine the limits of participation. But the alternative is to do nothing."

In each pilot country, two new entities will be created and their activities monitored by UNAIDS. A national HIV/AIDS drugs advisory board will be set up under the Minister of Health composed of representatives of communities affected by HIV/AIDS as well as medical and public health officials. The board will devise a coordinated national policy for the provision of HIV-related drugs and set criteria for the participation of health centres in the initiative and for the selection of patients. It will also draw up treatment guidelines for the use of physicians.

The second entity will be a non-profit company, which will act as a clearing house for placing orders and bringing drugs into the country. It will also be a recipient and channel for drug subsidies. The company, which will be funded by the pharmaceutical companies that use it, will also address logistical and other related issues.

Pharmaceutical companies will make available a range of HIV-related drugs, including antiretrovirals to combat the underlying HIV infection, antimicrobials to prevent and treat opportunistic infections common among people with HIV/AIDS, and antibiotics to treat sexually transmitted diseases (STDs). In addition, diagnostic companies will provide virological services and tests for patient monitoring. Decisions about which drugs are provided will vary from country to country, and will be taken by the advisory board after assessments of the country's specific needs.

While the pharmaceutical companies will provide HIV/AIDS-related drugs at subsidized prices, local health ministries will both create new sources of funding and build on existing programmes. UNAIDS will provide $1 mn for oversight of the health advisory boards and non-profit companies, evaluation of the pilot phase, and the dissemination of recommendations for applying the initiative in other comparable situations.

UNAIDS hopes this programme will provide information to determine whether HIV/AIDS-related drugs can be obtained and distributed effectively in developing countries. "Armed with this information, countries will then be able to mobilize the necessary resources to treat infected individuals, and to help control the global epidemic," says Dr. Joseph Saba, coordinator of the Initiative.

The UNAIDS plan has been supported by French President Jacques Chirac who at an AIDS conference in Abidjan last December appealed to rich nations to create an AIDS therapy support fund to help Africa. Mr. Chirac denounced the AIDS therapy gap that has left the continent struggling with two-thirds of the world's victims but little or none of the new drugs available in rich countries.

However, some experts say the plan will divert national resources to one disease at the expense of other diseases such as malaria. Others say the large sums of money involved could be better spent on the hunt for a vaccine. "Only 6 percent of people with AIDS worldwide get drugs, making a vaccine the only option for the other 94 percent," says Mr. Gordon Nary, director of the International Association of Physicians in AIDS Care.

— Peter Mwaura

decade ago, and in others the rate of progress of the past three decades has slowed down (see graph, page 16). AIDS is also taking an increasing share – about one-third – of deaths from infectious diseases in Africa.

Another reason for stronger government action is that although HIV/AIDS is expected to have a small net impact on per capita growth of gross domestic product, it will exacerbate poverty in the most severely affected countries. As it afflicts economically active adults in their prime income-earning years, AIDS is likely to deepen poverty and leave increasing numbers of children without parental support.

Until a cure is found, the best way to arrest the AIDS epidemic is to assist individuals to reduce the risky behaviour that may lead to infection.

Poverty and gender inequality have been recognized as among the factors which facilitate the spread of HIV. Poor women in situations of dependency often find it more difficult to negotiate safe sex. In addition, accelerated labour migration, rapid urbanization and cultural modernization, as well as conflict and large-scale movements of people, are facilitators of HIV transmission.

The current situation in Angola is a microcosm of these factors. Ms. Marilia Cabral Afonso, an Angolan delegate at the Abidjan conference, warns that her country is grappling with an explosive AIDS crisis arising out of three decades of civil war. Millions of people, including the youth, have been uprooted, creating conditions ripe for the spread of HIV. There has also been a recent influx of thousands of refugees, traders and illegal miners from other countries where HIV prevalence is high, worsening the epidemic. And areas still controlled by the opposition movement, UNITA, are off-limits to national AIDS control efforts. Appealing for international support to Angola's National AIDS Programme, Ms. Afonso said prevention activities only began two years ago.

Expanded and early involvement is key

An expanded response to the epidemic is critical, Dr. Piot of UNAIDS notes, bringing in resources and expertise from beyond the health sector, including the private sector. An example is a collaborative effort supported by UNAIDS between governments, pharmaceutical and diagnostic companies to increase access to HIV/AIDS drugs in developing countries (see box, page 17). Another initiative involves the manufacturer of the female condom, with which UNAIDS has negotiated a reduced price to increase its accessibility in the developing world. South Africa has ordered 1.5 mn of the condoms, which give women an extra option to protect themselves against HIV and other STDs, and other countries are expected to follow.

Early intervention is especially critical in those countries where the epidemic is still nascent, says the Bank. In North Africa and in Cape Verde, Madagascar, Mauritania, Mauritius and Somalia, for example, governments have a "unique opportunity" to intervene aggressively to avert a full-scale epidemic. HIV prevention is obviously less expensive than treatment, a fact particularly relevant in low-income countries where health care is often publicly financed.

As the numbers of cases and treatment costs mount, AIDS will consume increasing amounts of public resources that could be used for other needs, warns the Bank. Those countries where the epidemic has already progressed need active government involvement to slow transmission rates and provide appropriate care to mitigate the impact of the disease.

With sufficient political commitment, governments can work to slow HIV transmission in a variety of ways, among them subsidizing information campaigns, the sale of condoms and clean syringes, regulating commercial sex work, and adopting policies which remove social and economic constraints to safer practices. The latter include promoting the acceptability of condoms and improving the status of women.

Increasing the amount and quality of information on the nature and extent of risky sexual behaviour in the population can contribute to ensuring that prevention programmes target those most likely to contract and spread HIV. In Kinshasa, for example, an STD prevention programme offering 500 HIV-negative sex workers free condoms, STD tests, treatment and counseling resulted in a reduction in the incidence of STDs, including HIV. Before the programme, only 11 per cent of the sex workers used condoms, but three months into it, more than half reported they used condoms consistently.

Although treatment of HIV is difficult and expensive, governments can mitigate the impact on individuals and the overall health sector by:

- providing information about the efficacy of treatments;
- subsidizing the treatment of infectious opportunistic illnesses and STDs;
- subsidizing the start-up costs for blood safety;
- supporting community-initiated home-based AIDS care; and
- providing special assistance to the poor affected by the disease.

They can also continue to work with bilateral and multilateral donors which have been instrumental in providing funding for national AIDS prevention programmes, and with local and international NGOs and community-based organizations, which in Africa have been in the forefront of providing care for people living with HIV and AIDS, the Bank report says. ■

In a number of countries, infant mortality rates are rising alarmingly because of AIDS.

LDCs still face tariff and trade barriers

Poorest countries get promises of better market access, as well as conditionalities

By **Tim Wall**

Promises of better market access and help to increase their export capacity were made to the world's poorest countries at a 27-28 October 1997 ministerial-level meeting held in Geneva by the World Trade Organization (WTO) and the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD). But finance and trade ministers of the least developed countries (LDCs) were disappointed to see conditionalities attached to promised trade concessions, along with only slow progress on greater access for their textiles.

Strong measures are clearly needed. The 48 LDCs (of which 33 are African) have about 10 per cent of the world's population but ship only 0.37 per cent of global exports, and 1.4 per cent of developing country exports, according to a 1997 report published by UNCTAD.

The outcome fell well short of the stated goal of the LDC ministers, which was to have all tariffs and quotas on their exports lifted. But this was clearly a long-term rather than an immediate objective. WTO Director-General Renato Ruggiero had already proposed across-the-board zero tariffs on LDC products at the 1996 summit of the Group of 7 industrialized countries and again at the 1996 WTO ministerial meeting in Singapore. But requisite support was lacking (see *Africa Recovery*, January-April 1997). Still intent on helping LDCs to benefit from the new global trading environment, WTO member states represented in Singapore instructed the body to work with UNCTAD to set up an appropriate framework. The Geneva meeting was the result.

The European Union, which already allows duty-free access for many products from the African, Caribbean and Pacific countries through the Lomé Convention, said in Geneva that it would extend the same terms to Asian LDCs in 1998. The United States drew attention to its elimination, a few months earlier, of tariffs on 1,700 products from LDCs, and also to a bill before the US Congress which would grant trade advantages to African countries undertaking approved political and economic reforms.

The US and the EU together absorb roughly half of LDC exports, according to UNCTAD statistics. But developing countries as a whole also constitute a major market, consuming one-third of LDC exports. Therefore measures to improve access announced by Egypt, Korea, Malaysia, Mauritius, Morocco, Singapore, Thailand and Turkey set significant precedents, according to Mr. Chandra Kant Patel, UNCTAD's coordinator for LDC affairs. Other major partners such as Japan, Canada and Australia reminded the meeting of their liberal terms for imports of a wide range of LDC products.

The second phase of the plan agreed to in Geneva recognizes that without strengthened productive capacity, LDCs will not be able to take full advantage of more open export markets. An "integrated framework" sets terms for cooperation on technical assistance to LDCs among six international agencies: UNCTAD and the UNCTAD-affiliated International Trade Centre, the WTO, the International Monetary Fund, the World Bank and the UN Development Programme. The aim is to develop country-level work plans to modernize trade regimes, attract foreign investment and diversify commodity production. Eventually, a broader range of agencies, including the Food and Agriculture Organization, the UN Industrial Development Organization and regional development banks, are to be involved. Hong Kong announced a $1.25 mn contribution for technical assistance through the framework.

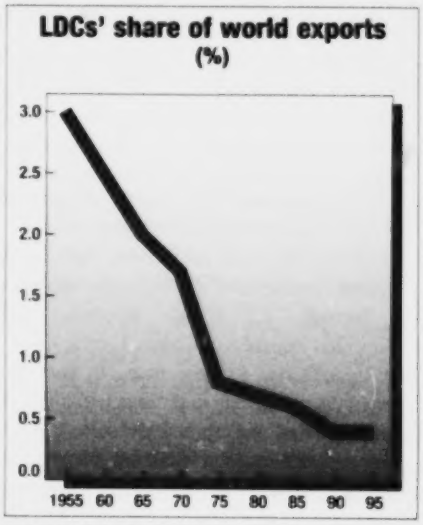
Promises unfulfilled

The action plan for LDCs presented to the meeting by the WTO notes that there is considerable room for improvement of existing systems for preferential market access, including implementation of the Agreement on Textiles and Clothing from the Uruguay Round of trade negotiations. Textile production is a classic start-up sector for building industrial capacity, and developing countries have long complained that Uruguay Round promises of easier access to major markets for their textile products have remained unfulfilled.

Neither will the 1,700 duty-free tariff lines added to the Generalized System of Preferences of the US help stimulate LDC textile production. Mr. Richard Rosenblum, who led the US delegation in Geneva, told *Africa Recovery* that one-quarter of the US tariff schedule, including textiles, is generally excluded by statute from preferential elimination of tariffs. "But we can do more for Africa," he said, referring to bills before Congress that would reward reforming African economies with, among other benefits, duty-free access for a wide range of products including textiles.

Still, much of the opposition to the otherwise generally well regarded US "African Initiative" concerns free access for African textiles, say Congressional staffers interviewed for this article. When the legislation is approved – most likely in mid-1998 – such access may have been bargained away.

And if there is no tangible increase in market access, African leaders may become disillusioned with an initiative that is often promoted in Congress as a substitute for wasteful foreign aid and a means to leverage greater democracy in African governments.



Source: UN Africa Recovery from UNCTAD Handbook of International Trade and Development Statistics 1995

The emphasis in the draft US legislation on limiting preferences to countries applying approved political and economic reforms is only one instance of the conditionalities attached to trade agreements which drew complaints at the Geneva meeting from Egyptian Ambassador Munir Zahran and South African Trade Minister Alec Erwin.

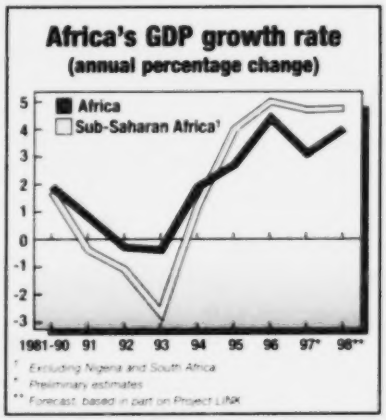
Mr. Ruggiero's proposal to lift all tariffs and restrictions on LDC exports, along with other unilateral concessions, will be tabled again at the May 1998 WTO ministerial meeting, says Mr. Richard Eglin, chief WTO organizer of the Geneva meeting. "The door remains open," he said, "and anyone can step through it." ■

Africa in 1997

from page 1

much less in 1997. Oil prices declined, as did agricultural production in many countries, including Ethiopia, South Africa and Zambia where bumper crops had driven agricultural output to record levels in 1996.

Drought and poor rains were especially severe in northern, eastern and central Africa. Crops were below normal in most northern African countries, with Morocco particularly hard hit: its GDP fell – by 2.2 per cent – for the fourth time in the last six years. Even though Morocco's cereal imports rose along with food prices, the average inflation rate declined in 1997. In eastern and central Africa, drought led to famine and urgent appeals for international food aid in parts of Ethiopia – which had achieved food self-sufficiency in 1996 – and in Rwanda, Sudan and Tanzania. Severe food shortages also occurred in Burundi, the Congo Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo, Eritrea, Kenya and Uganda due to poor rains. In contrast, heavy rains or flooding in Malawi, Somalia and Zambia caused widespread damage to food crops and depressed agricultural output and GDP growth.



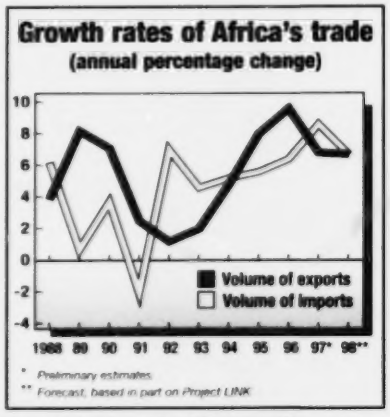
Source: UN Africa Recovery from UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs

Critical need for investment

Thus, while Africa remains vulnerable to exogenous shocks, such as bad weather or falling commodity prices, it appears that many countries have entered a period of higher underlying, sustainable growth rates, perhaps between 5 and 6 per cent. But in order to reach even higher levels of growth and significantly reduce pervasive poverty and unemployment, Africa will need more investment in such areas as human resources, infrastructure and institutions. Indeed, at 4 per cent growth of GDP (and a population growth rate of 2.6 per cent), it will take about 12 years more just to recover the GDP per capita level of 1980.

One structural concern is that the higher growth achieved in some countries in recent years is to some extent driven by the energy and mining sectors. These are relatively isolated from the rest of the economy and thus have little direct effect on living standards of the majority of the population. Examples include Angola, and Equatorial Guinea (which began exporting oil in 1992). The double-digit growth expected this year in Mozambique is also partly driven by exports of electricity to South Africa and Zimbabwe. Whether benefits will reach larger segments of the population partly depends on how the increased government revenues are spent.

Higher export earnings was the most important factor behind the growth in GDP in several countries in 1997. Strong exporters included Botswana, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Morocco, Namibia, South Africa, Tunisia, Uganda and Zimbabwe, in particular. The volume of exports increased by 6.6 per cent in 1997, down from 9.4 per cent in 1996 but still rather robust. Strong demand in developed countries for Africa's exports, an improvement in non-oil commodity prices (particularly coffee prices, which rose by over 35 per cent, and moderate increases for most minerals and metals) and larger volumes were the main factors in export growth. Most fuel exporters compensated for the fall in oil prices by increasing the volume of production. Expansion of non-traditional exports or revenues from tourism partly compensated Ghana and Zambia for lower export revenues from traditional sources.



Source: UN Africa Recovery from UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs

In South Africa, steady growth in exports, driven by a weak exchange rate and recent investments in capacity, particularly in the processing of minerals, prevented slow growth from deteriorating into a recession. With such constraints as lower agricultural production, high interest rates and a fall in gold prices, South Africa's GDP growth was around 2 per cent in 1997 compared with 3.1 per cent in 1996. But its investment and trade with regional economies contributed to the dynamism of the Southern African Development Community (SADC) where GDP growth of its member countries (excluding South Africa) averaged over 5 per cent.

Africa's fuel exporters all registered similar or lower GDP growth in 1997 compared to 1996. Nigeria's output grew by about 3.5 per cent but economic activity continued to be hampered by frequent power failures and severe fuel shortages caused by lack of maintenance of oil refineries. Angola's expansion of offshore oil production provided the only source of growth as recovery in other sectors was harmed by slow progress in the peace process.

High average for inflation

Aiming to improve macroeconomic balance, African countries generally continued to adhere to strict monetary and fiscal policies, and financial sector reforms deepened in several countries. New legislation gave the central bank greater autonomy in Kenya, and the banking sector was restructured in Mozambique, Tanzania and Zimbabwe.

Despite such efforts, Africa's inflation rate in 1997 was 47 per cent compared to 34 per cent in 1996. Notable causes for this high average included hyperinflation in Angola and the Democratic Republic of Congo, continued high inflation in Burundi – where economic sanctions by neighbouring countries led to widespread scarcities – and in Sudan, where civil unrest and political instability have disrupted economic activity. Higher food prices drove up inflation in countries that suffered from drought and food-production deficits. Inflation also crept up to the highest levels in recent years in Kenya and Uganda, two countries that had reduced inflation to single digits. Wage increases helped push up inflation rates in countries such as Benin and Zimbabwe. In contrast, lower inflation rates in Algeria, Egypt, Namibia and South Africa led to an easing of monetary policy through lower interest rates.

Domestic investment, as well as slightly

improved inflows of foreign direct investment, were important contributors to GDP growth in some countries in 1997. Foreign investment responded in part to opportunities created by steadily expanding privatization programmes in such countries as Cape Verde, Côte d'Ivoire, Egypt, Morocco, Mozambique, Senegal, South Africa, Tunisia, Uganda and Zambia. Similar programmes were initiated in Botswana, Eritrea and Lesotho, while Zimbabwe concluded its first privatization with the sale of Dairibord Zimbabwe. Other countries which took specific measures to promote investment included Algeria and Gabon, while Egypt liberalized trade and passed a new investment law. This offers, among other things, new tax incentives, protection of property rights, freedom of money transfers, and easier conditions for new investment.

One structural concern is that the higher growth achieved in some countries is to some extent driven by the energy and mining sectors, which are relatively isolated from the rest of the economy.

Since the devaluation of the CFA franc in 1994, and with the exception of Cameroon and the Congo Republic, investment ratios (at constant prices) have risen in Franc Zone countries from the low levels of the early 1990s. In South Africa, however, a period of rapid growth of investment ended after a number of large projects was completed and capacity utilization rates fell in 1996.

In another area of resource flows, rocky relations with multilateral financial institutions led to suspended or delayed disbursements for three countries. Last July, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) cancelled remaining disbursements of a $205 mn enhanced structural adjustment facility (ESAF) loan to Kenya and suspended the entire programme. While the Kenyan government complained of being subjected to political conditionality, the IMF said there had been a technical breach of one of the agreements and that government efforts to root out public sector corruption and fraud were inadequate. In October, the IMF similarly suspended the release of the first tranche of the second-year allotment of a $115 mn ESAF loan to Ethiopia. The IMF wanted faster liberalization of trade, and of interest and exchange rates, while the Ethiopians held out for a more cautious approach in the three-year programme. Zimbabwe suffered a similar fate in October when the World Bank withheld over $65 mn in balance of payments support. This came shortly after the Bank had announced the lifting of a freeze on such aid to Zimbabwe which had been in effect since 1995. The Bank wanted to know how the government planned to finance a package of gratuities and monthly pensions for independence war veterans which was hastily approved after street protests by veterans' groups and their supporters. ■

Henk-Jan Brinkman and Carl Gray are Economic Affairs Officers in the Development Policy Analysis Division of the UN Department of Economic and Social Affairs. This article draws on material prepared for The World Economy at the Beginning of 1998, Report of the Secretary-General *which is an update of the* World Economic and Social Survey, 1997. *The authors' views do not necessarily reflect those of the United Nations.*

Cotton ginning in Kenya: employment-intensive growth is needed for poverty reduction in Africa.

Urgent need for job-creation in Africa

Despite the recovery of economic growth rates in several African countries, the overall employment situation remains critical, with labour supply rapidly outpacing productive job-creation. Africa must, therefore, go beyond structural adjustment stabilization programmes and launch investment-led growth strategies that create jobs and reduce poverty. These are among the conclusions of a report issued late last year by the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the UN Development Programme (UNDP).

According to the report, *Jobs For Africa: A Policy Framework for an Employment-Intensive Growth Strategy*, some 7.4 mn new job-seekers will enter sub-Saharan Africa's labour market this year, rising to about 10.4 mn in 2008. This projected annual growth rate of over 2.9 per cent in the 1997-2010 period makes sub-Saharan Africa the developing region with the fastest growing labour force. Comparable growth rates for the labour forces of South-East Asia and Latin America are 1.9 per cent and 1.8 per cent respectively.

The report states that in most sub-Saharan African countries, labour productivity is lower today than in 1980, and in many, even lower than in 1965. While Botswana, Mauritius, Chad and the Seychelles show the biggest gains in the productivity of labour, there has been significant regression in most countries, the equivalent of 75 per cent of the sub-Saharan work force. Equally, formal sector workers have suffered large reductions in the real value of their wages, which have collapsed with little expansion in formal sector employment.

Noting the rarity of coherent national development strategies in African countries, the report states that the recent turnaround in growth and the renewed efforts to accelerate development provide the region with a "launching pad" for economic take-off if the right policies are introduced and pursued. The major challenge is designing a coherent strategy with the explicit objective of maximizing employment growth and ensuring access by the poor to productive employment opportunities. The report calls for an employment-intensive growth strategy whose objective is sustained growth and increased job-creation. It argues that the creation of employment opportunities is the most effective way of reducing poverty. The report also points out that orthodox structural adjustment has led to a contraction of job opportunities and real incomes. According to the ILO and UNDP, African countries need to mobilize all domestic resources, and improve the skills of the work force, with the public sector playing a leading role by making its own spending more productive. One particular target is to increase productivity and incomes in agriculture, including enabling women to diversify into cash crop production.

Turning to the UN system, the report calls for a coordinated programme of action in support of investment-led growth strategies. It says the programme should aim, among other things, to build capacity at national and regional level to design and implement policies for reducing poverty and creating jobs.

— John Nyamu

Landmines inflict heavy costs on Africa

Programmes of demining and assistance for survivors are vital

By **Ruth Ansah Ayisi**
Kuito, Angola

Emilia Paulina tries to make sense of her landmine accident as she lies in her bed in a stark hospital ward in the Angolan city of Kuito. "I was walking alone. I knew about mines, but I was very confident, because it was a route which had been cleared," said 27-year-old Paulina softly, covering up her freshly bandaged stumps with a cotton cloth. "Then I remember hearing a loud explosion, and I just kept screaming. People came running to help me. The mine must have just been laid."

The explosion in early November blew off both Paulina's legs and claimed her unborn baby. She had already lost four other children during the civil war. Paulina is one of an estimated 26,000 civilians worldwide who are killed or maimed by mines each year, some 40 per cent of them women and children.

UNICEF/C. Sattlberger

Mozambican landmine victim checks an artificial leg: thousands of Africans are maimed or killed each year by mines.

While tens of thousands like Paulina are trying to come to terms with the immense personal tragedy inflicted by landmines, governments are now confronted with the staggering economic costs. Angola and Mozambique are examples of countries where hardships are severe. During the war, mines were placed around strategic economic installations, such as the Cahora Bassa dam in Mozambique, around oil installations in Angola, and on roads and bridges, as well as around water sources, markets and schools.

Parts of Angola are still inaccessible because of mines and you need a small aircraft to reach some towns. Even then, as in Kuito, you may find skull and cross-bone signs all around the airport indicating scattered mines.

Even though far more children are killed by bombs and bullets, anti-landmine activists argue that mines cause greater long-term hardship. Mines waste farmland, forests and orchards, and cut off access to water points, schools and health services. They isolate entire communities from each other, and in emergencies, aid can only be delivered by costly airlifts.

Mr. Jean Claude Legrand of UNICEF, a landmine expert who worked in Mozambique, describes the problem: "Imagine a coach telling a football team that they can practice, but be careful because there is just one suspected mine on the pitch. Nobody will go to play. This can mean a key road for a community may be unused for decades because a person suspects, even wrongly, that a mine lies somewhere along miles of road."

Landmines, known as "the poor man's weapon," cost only $3-10 to lay, but $300-1,000 to remove. Some $33 bn is needed to deactivate the 110 mn mines laid around the world. With 6-8 mn mines laid in Angola, or one mine for every two Angolans, the government faces financial and practical obstacles.

The task of demining Kuito began in 1995. "It was considered a high risk area for mines," says Mr. Luciano Rufino, the operations manager for Halo Trust, a British non-governmental organization that demines and teaches mine awareness. So far 30 areas have been demined and some 4,000 mines unearthed. But 100 more mine fields remain to be cleared in and around the city. The task is both labourious and dangerous. Three deminers have been hurt on the job, one losing his arms, another his eyes and one a foot. Without maps for the minefields, says Mr. Rufino, it would take about 10 years to clear the province. He also says fresh mines are being laid.

Angola needs funds to support its estimated 80,000 mine victims, one of the world's largest amputee populations. The life-time treatment of a surviving victim costs an average of $5,000. One prosthesis is between $30 and $1,000 and children may need a new one every six months as they grow.

Mine awareness campaigns

UNICEF supports landmine awareness campaigns in many countries like Mozambique and Angola, using radio, posters, books and theatre and has budgeted about $5 mn in 1998 mostly for mine awareness education, advocacy and aid for survivors.

For example, a group of Angolans put on one of their landmine awareness plays, a relatively low-cost but popular means of mine awareness. The crowd revelled in the entertainment while listening to the message. Many of them were in wheel chairs or had crutches lying on the ground in front of them. Many of those interviewed said they had had to walk through mine fields when looking for food.

While mine awareness comes too late for them, at least they can benefit from the assistance offered to survivors. Paulina went for her first prosthetic fitting 20 days later. Some day, when the mines are cleared, she may be able once again to farm the fertile land around Kuito. Just maybe. But such thoughts are far from her mind. "My husband will look after me now," is all she can say. Paulina's traumatic loss and the problems she faces in the future perfectly illustrate the devastation that landmines wreak throughout Africa. ■

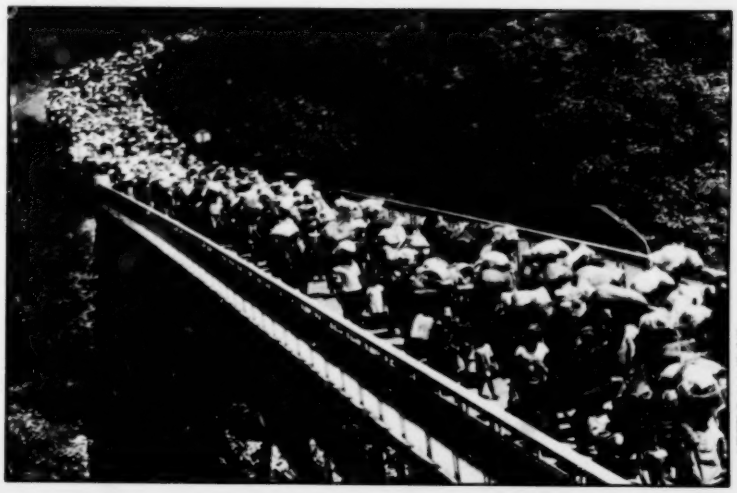
Ruth Ansah Ayisi, a New York-based UNICEF Communication Officer, led a group of international journalists on a week-long tour of Angola last November.

Forging peace in Central Africa

Parliamentarians stress military reorganization and ethnic reconciliation

By **John Nyamu**

Military reorganization, arms control and reformed election systems to ensure representation for both majority and minority ethnic groups were among a series of ambitious measures proposed by African legislators as crucial steps towards a solution to the escalating crisis in the Great Lakes region. The proposals, highlighted as priority areas for action, were put forward by African lawmakers participating in a working session on the Great Lakes region during the 19th annual UN parliamentary forum of Parliamentarians for Global Action (PGA) held at UN headquarters on 9-10 October last year.



Rwandese refugees return home from Tanzania: continuing ethnic tensions complicate peace efforts.

Criticizing exclusionary policies that led to disaster in both Burundi and Rwanda, Mr. Manuel Pinto of Uganda, who chaired the session, said that the existing machinery must continue to be used to bring warring parties to the negotiating table. He expressed concern over the actions of President Laurent Kabila of the Democratic Republic of Congo in awarding himself wider powers, ruling by decree and postponing promised elections.

Mr. Adrien Sibomana of Burundi said that the situation in the region is coloured by great passions born of ethnicity which need to be calmed. He noted that although neighbouring countries claim they want to help Burundi, none of them have diplomatic ties with Bujumbura.

But Mr. Jean Minani, also of Burundi, said the regional sanctions against that country are the only means of putting pressure on the regime. He called for an arms embargo to avoid a repetition of the Rwanda genocide.

Multiple trouble spots

In a paper produced by the working session, the African parliamentarians noted that the deepening conflict in Burundi and the rising level of violence and insecurity in Rwanda have been overshadowed by the international media's focus on the stand-off between the UN and the Democratic Republic of Congo over alleged massacres and human rights violations in the east of that country. Meanwhile, each of the other countries of the region – Sudan, Uganda, Tanzania, Kenya and Zambia – has its own trouble spots and instability factors.

Military reorganization, the paper said, is imperative for a sustainable regional peace. It emphasized the need for national populations to have a sense of being protected by their armed and police forces and for governments to ensure proper representation of various ethnic groups in the armed services' leadership. Military reform should also include a programme for reintegrating former soldiers into society.

To achieve arms control, the paper proposed a "buy-back" programme, developed and administered multilaterally, to end the growing black market in small and light conventional weapons. This proliferation and stockpiling of deadly arsenals in the region has been facilitated by the end of long wars in such countries as Mozambique and Angola, the parliamentarians noted. They stressed that peace agreements should always incorporate a comprehensive demobilization and disarmament component. This key factor for building peace should be monitored by the UN or by another multilateral agency, they added, provided that it has the capacity to monitor and regulate disarmament and the arms trade.

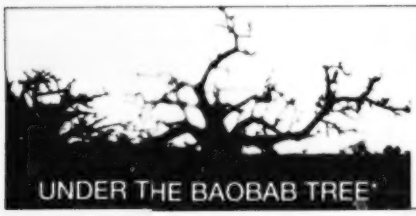
While the parliamentarians argued that simple majority rule is an unsuitable system for the Great Lakes countries, their paper stressed that this is not a rejection of democracy. Instead, they called for exploration of other models of democratic governance which could better address the needs of all citizens, regardless of majority or minority status. The paper also proposed a PGA-convened regional conference to examine various election systems.

The working session felt that conflict in Burundi had significantly reduced the window of opportunity for national reconciliation through conventional power-sharing. It suggested a confederation, along the lines of the Dayton Agreement for Bosnia-Herzegovina, as an example of innovative frameworks that should be explored in the Great Lakes context.

The working session argued that in Rwanda, where the trials of genocide suspects are "plagued by political manipulation, inadequate resources and an unacceptable level of abuse," the provision of magistrates, judges and defence lawyers would facilitate fairer trials in the short term. But in the long run, fundamental reforms are key to eliminating political bias. The paper also urged the active training of under-represented ethnic groups to take their place in the legal system.

Government efforts to create common economic interests among different groups would better promote national reconciliation than the "seemingly endless quest to redress past wrongs," the parliamentarians said. They urged governments to foster inter-ethnic business ventures, with parliaments taking the lead in establishing national economic committees comprising business and local leaders to ensure that economic imbalances are not exacerbated and that new private enterprises improve the existing inequitable distribution of resources.

Enhanced regional economic cooperation, along the lines of the revived East African Community grouping Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania, can also help reduce regional tensions and conflicts, the paper said. ■



Hoping for peace: a soldier's story

by Djibril Diallo

Domingues Manuel Sampaio is certain about one thing. He wants to have nothing more to do with war. "Nothing will make me go back to fighting again," he told a group of international journalists who visited Angola recently. "Not money or coercion," he said through an interpreter.

Mr. Sampaio is part of a growing group of Angolans who have thrown their weight behind the 1994 Lusaka Peace Accord, which remains the basis for ending the decades-old civil war that has charred the lives of people all over Angola.

At 23, Mr. Sampaio has become a veteran. Wizened by almost a decade of life in the bush, he credits his being alive today to an accident that cost him one arm. He was barely 14 when he was drafted into the Angolan army. Like thousands of other child soldiers on either side of the civil war, his childhood was lost in the bush in a war that pitted the former Marxist government against the rebel UNITA movement. For Mr. Sampaio and his colleagues, many of them also child soldiers, UNITA was the enemy, to be killed on sight.

Two years ago, his military adventure came to an end. His unit had stopped to rest during a routine patrol when a mortar fell nearby, triggering a buried land mine. When the dust settled, his right arm was gone, severed in the explosion. But he was lucky. Many of his unit fared worse. The force of the explosion was enough to turn their patrol vehicle into a blazing wreck and the other soldiers, dazed by the sudden impact, were unable to get clear of the vehicle in time. Most were burnt to death. Mr. Sampaio was saved only because he had wandered a short distance away from the vehicle.

After spending several months in hospital, his wound healed sufficiently for him to be moved into a training centre for war-disabled people on the outskirts of Luanda, Angola's capital. The centre, run by the government with support from the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the International Labour Organization and a number of other agencies, provides vocational training to disabled soldiers, giving them new skills to help them secure gainful employment.

At the centre, Mr. Sampaio joined more than 100 other disabled former soldiers who were already receiving vocational training. Early in life, he had set his mind on becoming an auto mechanic and owning his own workshop in Luanda, but he has had to settle for a course in tailoring at the centre. Still, he is happy and hopes for a brighter future.

He is confident that with the implementation of the peace accord, the climate in Angola will be just right for the new life on which he has decided to embark. "When I leave here, I want to open a small business, a micro-business," he told the journalists. "I want to buy some more machines and set up a little shop to employ people, and I hope, with that, my future will look bright."

Like Mr. Sampaio, many Angolans, young and old, are pinning their high hopes on the success of the peace process. For them, an end to the fighting and the return of peace is the only way out of the years of hardship, death and deprivation forced on millions of ordinary people by the civil war. Peace will also create the appropriate conditions for an onslaught on one of Angola's most serious problems – the millions of landmines scattered across the country.

Hervé Peyrard

Defusing a mine in Angola: the UN is helping strengthen national demining capacities.

Sebastião Salgado

To reduce new deaths and injuries from landmines, public awareness campaigns are essential.

The programmes run by the training centre for disabled former soldiers are part of a concerted attempt to tackle some of the most insidious effects of landmines. Other ongoing efforts include a National Mine Clearance Programme which aims to strengthen Angola's demining capacity. Also supported by UNDP, the $25 mn programme focuses on capacity-building at the Angolan Institute for the Removal of Obstacles and Explosive Ordinance.

Restoration of peace in Angola means that these programmes can continue and that they can be expanded to those parts of the country that have been under UNITA control, with the possibility of reaching greater numbers of those in need. That is why people like Mr. Sampaio are so determined that the peace process must succeed. ■

**The African Baobab is one of the world's hardiest trees, thriving in even the most arid environment. It is also the tree under which some Africans traditionally meet to decide issues of common concern.*

AFRICA AGENDA

FUTURE EVENTS

16-20 March 1998, Dakar (Senegal) – Africa Regional Literacy Forum, on "New Directions for the Year 2000." Organized by the International Literacy Institute, which is co-sponsored by UNESCO and the University of Pennsylvania Graduate School of Education. Tel (1-215) 898-9979, fax 898-9804, e-mail <ILI@literacy.upenn.edu>.

2 April, London (UK) – African Health: Progress, Perils and Potential. Meeting organized by the Nairobi-based African Medical Research Foundation. Contact Tom Noel, tel (44-171) 233-0066.

13-16 April, Havana (Cuba) – International Women's Conference organized by the Federation of Cuban Women. Will discuss women vis-à-vis: economy and sustainable development; political participation and decision-making; health, education, culture and social security; the media; violence and discrimination. Tel (1-212) 627-0444.

13-17 April, Washington (US) – World Bank/IMF spring meetings. Tel (1-202) 458-5204.

28 April-1 May, Addis Ababa (Ethiopia) – African Women and Economic Development: Investing in Our Future. International conference organized by the UN Economic Commission for Africa, and sponsored by UNDP and the World Bank among others. Tel. (251-1) 51.89.19, fax 51.22.33, e-mail <eca40th@un.org> or <ecainfo@un.org>.

20-22 May, Accra (Ghana) – The West African Computer and Telecommunications Exhibition. Contact African Information Technology Exhibitions and Conferences, tel (44-1480) 407-477, fax 407-677, e-mail <aitec.admin@dial.pipex.com>.

27-31 May, Columbia, Missouri (US) – International Symposium on Society and Resource Management. Contact the University of Missouri. Tel (1-573) 882-9558, fax 882-1953.

9-12 June, Maputo (Mozambique) – Regional Conference for Africa on soil fertility and fertilizers, organized by the Paris-based International Fertilizer Industry Association. Tel (33-1) 53-930-500, fax 53-930-545.6/7, e-mail <ifamail@world-net.fr>, Web <http://www.fertilizer.org>.

19-21 October, Tokyo (Japan) – Second Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD II), organized by the UN, the government of Japan and the Global Coalition for Africa. Contact Ms. Kimiku Uno. Tel (1-212) 963-2166.

2-13 November, Buenos Aires (Argentina) – Fourth Conference of the Parties to the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change. Contact Michael Williams, tel (41-22) 979-9242, fax 797-3464, e-mail <mwilliams@unep.ch>.

WHAT HAS TAKEN PLACE

9 February 1998, New York – High-level United Nations/International Chamber of Commerce meeting on boosting investment flows to least developed countries. Tel (1-212) 963-6896.

14-18 December 1997, Dakar (Senegal) – Seminar on the media and poverty, sponsored by UNDP, the government of Senegal and the Pan African News Agency. Tel (1-212) 906-5324, fax 906-5364.

9-11 December, Tehran (Iran) – Eighth Summit of the Organization of the Islamic Conference. Tel (98-21) 241-3162/3/4/5, fax 241-3161.

8-10 December, Cape Town (South Africa) – International consultations on partnership in the water sector for cities in Africa. Organized by the UN Centre for Human Settlement (Habitat), UNDP and the South African government. Tel (254-2) 623 039, fax 624 265/623 588, e-mail <kalyan.ray@unchs.org>.

9-11 December, Nairobi (Kenya) – International Workshop on Municipal Waste Management in Africa, organized by UNEP and UNIDO. Tel (254-2) 624 288/623 181, fax 623 928, e-mail <kamar@unep.org> or <lumber@unep.org>.

7-11 December, Abidjan (Côte d'Ivoire) – Tenth International Conference on AIDS in Africa, organized by the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS). Tel (1-212) 864-6643.

26-27 November, Cairo (Egypt) – First African Transport Forum organized by the ECA and Egypt's Ministry of Transport and Communication. Fax (251-1) 51.44.16.

29 September-10 October, Rome (Italy) – First Conference of the Parties to the United Nations Convention to Combat Desertification. Tel (41-22) 979-9111, fax 979-9030.

16 September-22 December, New York – UN General Assembly, 52nd session.

AFRICA BOOKS

Sub-Saharan Africa in the 1990s: Challenges to Democracy and Development, ed. Rukhsana A. Siddiqui (Praeger, Westport, Connecticut, US; 1997; 218 pp.; $59.95)

External Finance and Low-Income Countries, eds. Zubair Iqbal and Ravi Kanbur (IMF, Washington; 1997; 235 pp.; $22.50)

Filières nationales et marchés mondiaux de matières premières: veille stratégique et prospective by Serge Calabre, published under the "Futurs Africains" project of UNDP's National Long Term Perspective Studies programme (Economica, Paris; 1997; 477 pp.; 200 FF)

Futurs Africains – Quelques Repères: Cinq années d'Etudes nationales de perspectives à long terme en Afrique (UNDP/Futurs Africains, Abidjan, Côte d'Ivoire; 1997; 182 pp.)

Policy Consensus Strategy Vacuum: A Pan-African Vision for the 21st Century by Vijay S. Makhan (Macmillan, Nairobi, Kenya with the OAU, Addis Ababa; 1997; 88 pp.)

L'Afrique politique 1997: revendications populaires et recompositions politiques, annual publication of the Centre d'etude d'Afrique noire (CEAN), with political analysis of the major events of the year in sub-Saharan Africa. (CEAN, Bordeaux, France/Karthala, Paris; 1997; 326 pp.; 160 FF)

Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism by Mahmood Mamdani (Princeton University Press, Princeton, New Jersey, US; 1996; 353 pp.; $55 hb, $19.95 pb)

Sovereignty as Responsibility: Conflict Management in Africa by Francis M. Deng et al (Brookings, Washington; 1996; 265 pp.; $42.95 hb, $18.95 pb)

Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies by John Paul Lederach (United States Institute of Peace Press, Washington; 1997; 208 pp.; $32.50 hb, $14.95 pb)

Markets, Profits and Power: The Politics of Business in Benin and Togo by John R. Heilbrunn (Centre d'etude d'Afrique noire, Bordeaux, France; 1996; 43 pp.)

The Rwanda Crisis: History of a Genocide by Gérard Prunier, originally published in 1995; reissued with a new final chapter (Columbia University Press, New York; 1997; 424 pp.; $16.50 pb)

Loosing the Bonds: The United States and South Africa in the Apartheid Years by Robert Kinloch Massie (Doubleday, New York; 1998; 896 pp.; $40)

Sustainability, Growth, and Poverty Alleviation: A Policy and Agroecological Perspective, eds. Stephen A. Vosti and Thomas Reardon (Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore, Maryland, US; 1997; 407 pp; $55)

Les bas-fonds en Afrique tropical humide: guide de diagnostic et d'intervention by Philippe Lavigne Delville and Luc Boucher (Gret, Paris; 1997; 416 pp.; 187 FF)

Critical Issues in African Development, by Eric M. Kashambuzi (Rivercross Publishing, New York; 1997; 197 pages; $18.95)

Mr. Kashambuzi covers the gamut of issues central to Africa's economic development: agriculture and food security, debt, structural adjustment, poverty, education, employment, population and the environment. A scholar of economics, geography, demography and international law who also works for the UN Development Programme, Mr. Kashambuzi employs case studies and data from selected countries for his analysis, as well as applying a historical perspective. He concludes that primary responsibility for Africa's protracted developmental crisis may be laid at the feet of not only policies pursued by colonial and apartheid regimes, but also those pursued by post-independence governments.

Library of African Cinema 1998 (California Newsreel, San Francisco, US; 1997).

Published by the oldest non-profit, educational film distributor in the US, and available free of charge, this guide catalogues 40 African feature films, documentaries and television productions from California Newsreel's collection. Included in the catalogue are 12 recently released films from around the continent.

AFRICA IN BRIEF

US visit heralds 'new dialogue' with Africa

Stating that the US is opening a "new chapter" in its relations with the continent, Secretary of State Madeleine Albright visited seven African countries in December to demonstrate US support for the positive economic and political changes "sweeping across" the continent. "Africa matters" to Washington and to Americans, she said in a major policy address at the UN Economic Commission for Africa in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia – the first leg of a trip which also took her to Uganda, Rwanda, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Angola, Zimbabwe and South Africa.

Ms. Albright's trip – her first to the continent as Secretary of State – was intended to lay the groundwork for a visit by President Bill Clinton scheduled for March. President Clinton will make a state visit to South Africa, and is also expected to travel to Ghana, Uganda, Senegal and Botswana.

Praising Africa's "best new leaders" for working to build democratic societies and for making progress in reforming their economies, Secretary Albright acknowledged that the US and the international community must "do better" to work with Africans as "true partners" and put behind the "paternalism of the past."

The centrepiece of the Clinton administration's new Africa policy is its Africa Growth and Opportunity Act – trade legislation currently before Congress which will help countries that undertake economic reforms find capital to develop their industries and markets to sell their products, according to Ms. Albright. A $150 mn investment fund for sub-Saharan Africa has also been established by the Overseas Private Investment Corporation.

During her trip, the Secretary of State also announced a $30 mn Great Lakes Justice Initiative to develop "impartial, credible and effective" judicial systems in the Central African region and a $10 mn contribution to a World Bank trust fund to be set up for reconstruction projects that the Democratic Republic of the Congo considers priorities.

Indicative of the "new dialogue" the Secretary said she came to open with Africa, Ms. Albright expressed regret for the US's past support for corrupt dictators such as the late Mobutu Sese Seko of Zaire, as well as for American government inaction during major African crises such as the Rwandese genocide. "I came to listen and I have listened," said Ms. Albright at the end of the tour. ■

Progress and snags in HIPC debt initiative

Burkina Faso is the second African country to get a debt reduction package under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Initiative (HIPC). The deal, finalized in early November 1997, will reduce its foreign debt by around $115 mn by April 2000. But policy conditionalities and disagreements over funding have slowed progress on Côte d'Ivoire and Mozambique.

Burkina's debt-to-exports ratio is set to fall to 205 per cent from the 250 per cent projected for 2000. Its nominal debt was over $1.2 bn at the end of 1996, and nominal debt relief will amount to some $200 mn. In net present value (NPV), Burkina's debt stood at $680 mn, while export earnings averaged $285 mn in 1994-96.

The government chose this IMF-recommended package over an alternative which offered an earlier date (September 1999) for actual debt reduction. But the latter – backed by the World Bank – set a higher target debt-to-export ratio of 210 per cent, translated into slightly less relief at $109 mn.

When the HIPC initiative was first unveiled in 1996, there were doubts that Burkina would qualify: the IMF's first tentative assessment of the 41 HIPC countries classified Burkina's debt as "sustainable." Burkina's projected 250 per cent ratio was on the cusp of the IMF/World Bank's parameters for "sustainability" – then defined as an NPV debt-to-export ratio of 200-250 per cent or below, or a debt service ratio of 20-25 per cent or below. But Burkina eventually qualified due to its vulnerability to commodity price fluctuations and other external shocks. Once creditors accepted the case in principle, they debated what target debt-to-export ratio to set. Some favoured 225 per cent, but those for a ratio of 205-210 per cent won the day.

Meanwhile Côte d'Ivoire and Mozambique are expected to sign the next HIPC deals before April. At time of writing, Côte d'Ivoire was waiting to conclude an enhanced structural adjustment facility with the IMF – a precondition for a HIPC deal – before its debt agreement could be finalized.

Mozambique's deal has proved more complicated, mainly because the amount of debt reduction needed exceeds what some creditors were willing to pay. To achieve a sustainable debt ratio of 200 per cent in 1999, creditors would need to provide relief of $1,479 mn in NPV terms. Current burden-sharing arrangements – each creditor acts according to how much it is owed – would require $533 mn from multilateral creditors and $946 mn from bilaterals.

But this amount, bilateral creditors initially argued, would exceed the Paris Club's 80 per cent ceiling for reducing eligible bilateral debt. At the urging of the IMF and World Bank, however, the Paris Club on 21 January implicitly agreed to exceed that ceiling. It did so by promising the 80 per cent specified in the HIPC deal, plus $170 mn in foreign aid. This still leaves about $100 mn, which the Paris Club wants the multilaterals to pay.

— Christina Katsouris

African industrialization tops UNIDO's agenda

Upon his election as the new Director-General of the UN Industrial Development Organization (UNIDO), Mr. Carlos Alfredo Magariños declared in his inaugural address on 5 December that "Africa will remain UNIDO's number one priority." He told the delegates to the UNIDO General Conference in Vienna that he would listen very closely to African countries and their needs, with the aim of improving the organization's performance in the continent with increased services and programmes.

Industrial growth in Africa, measured as manufacturing value added (MVA), has spurted in recent years, according to UNIDO figures. From an actual decline in 1994, it grew by nearly 2 per cent in 1995 and 4.6 per cent in 1996. In North Africa, MVA increased by 2.4 per cent in 1994, nearly 4 per cent in 1995 and about 5 per cent in 1996. As a share of gross domestic product (GDP), however, manufacturing has remained stagnant, even declining slightly over the past quarter century, from 11 per cent of Africa's GDP in 1970 to under 10 per cent in 1995.

In a joint statement issued on African Industrialization Day, 20 November 1997, then UNIDO Director-General Mauricio de Maria y Campos, Organization of African Unity Secretary-General Salim Ahmed Salim and UN Economic Commission for Africa Executive

Changing of the guard at the Group of 77

UN / E. Schneider

Tanzania's Minister of Foreign Affairs Jakaya M. Kikwete (left), handed the Chairman's gavel, on 12 January in New York, to Indonesia's Minister of Foreign Affairs Ali Alatas. As Indonesia's Permanent Representative to the UN, Ambassador Makarim Wibisono will act as Chairman of the developing countries' Group in 1998.

Secretary K.Y. Amoako highlighted previous policy shortcomings, low management and labour skills, and inadequate physical infrastructure as major constraints on the growth of manufacturing enterprises in Africa. For the development of industry, they said, it is necessary to "redefine the role of the private sector as the main engine of growth," with a particular focus on assisting small- and medium-scale enterprises. Direct investment, they stressed, "is, and should be, the domain of nationals themselves." ■

World Bank considers child labour conditionality

The World Bank's board has endorsed a paper which recommends integrating concerns about child labour into its lending programmes. According to the paper, Bank programmes would be closely monitored for their effects on child labour and such issues would be included in policy discussions with countries where harmful child labour is a serious problem. To ensure that Bank projects do not contribute to the practice, its loan agreements would include "appropriate safeguards," according to the paper's recommendations.

Although the internationally recommended minimum age for work is 15 years, the International Labour Organization estimated that more than 73 million children aged 10-14 were economically active in 1995, representing 13.2 per cent of all children in that age group worldwide. The greatest number were found in Asia, with 44.6 million, or 13 per cent in the region. Africa followed with 23.6 million, but its rate was by far the highest, at 26.3 per cent, while Latin America came in third, at 5.1 million and 9.8 per cent. ■

Global Coalition for Africa urges anti-corruption fight

African leaders should initiate a concerted drive to combat corruption in all spheres of government activity, business transactions and international procurement, concluded a 1-2 November meeting in Maputo, Mozambique, of the Global Coalition for Africa (GCA). The GCA, an informal forum for dialogue among African and donor officials, also urged the international community to criminalize bribery in international business transactions.

Several weeks later, on 17 December, the 34 member-states of the industrialized countries' Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) signed a convention to make bribery of foreign public officials a criminal offence. A result of protracted negotiations within the OECD, the convention does not apply to payments to foreign political parties or private individuals, however. Subject to approval by national legislatures, the convention, which is binding, will take effect by the end of 1998.

The GCA meeting observed that while corruption is a worldwide phenomenon, its impact in Africa is particularly serious because the total amount of available resources in most countries is relatively small. Corruption and capital flight are closely connected, with embezzled funds often finding their way into secret accounts in developed countries, noted a statement of the GCA co-chairs, President Ketumile Masire of Botswana, President Alpha Oumar Konaré of Mali, Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi, Speaker of the South African Parliament Frene Ginwala, and Dutch Development Cooperation Minister Jan Pronk. They suggested the need to alter the laws and regulations governing the international banking system, to make it easier to trace and recover embezzled funds. ■

Guidelines issued for East African integration

The Arusha-based Secretariat of the Commission for East African Cooperation has issued a strategy document laying out the necessary steps for establishing a single market and investment area for Uganda, Kenya and Tanzania. Executive Secretary Francis Muthaura describes the publication as "the guiding policy in the process of East African cooperation." According to the blueprint, the three countries would begin by harmonizing their investment codes and facilitating intra-regional trade and investment, move to the inauguration of an East African stock exchange, and, among other measures, ultimately establish a single regional currency. ■

Commonwealth Development Corporation aiming to privatize

The Commonwealth Development Corporation (CDC), which provides assistance to commercial enterprises in some 54 developing countries around the world, is expected to announce a programme for its own privatization by the end of 1998 or early 1999. According to the CDC's country manager for Zimbabwe, Mr. Christopher Brain, consultants retained by the UK government and the CDC are currently working on such a programme, designed to expand its capital base and broaden its range of operations. Privatization would enable the CDC to borrow from capital markets.

According to Mr. Brain, the UK government would sell 60 per cent of the CDC to private investors, but retain a "golden share" of 40 per cent. This, he said, would help preserve the CDC's "unique character and development goals as an ethical and responsible investor." ■

AFRICA WATCH

LDCs

Conference on world's poorest countries set for 2001

The United Nations plans to hold a high-level conference in the year 2001, possibly in New York, to discuss the plight of the world's 48 least developed countries (LDCs). The Geneva-based UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) is responsible for organizing the proposed meeting, but its duration and dates have not be finalized. The conference will be the third major UN conferences on the plight of the world's poorest nations, following those held in 1981 and 1990, both in Paris.

Bangladesh Ambassador to the UN Anwarul Karum Chowdhury, who coordinates LDC delegations at the UN, says the status of these poor countries needs to be urgently reviewed, given the failure of the international community to come up with the necessary support for their development.

On 9 February, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan and other senior officials, meeting with a high-level delegation from the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC), agreed to collaborate in promoting greater investment flows into Africa and the LDCs. They called on UNCTAD to work with the ICC to prepare a business investment guide to highlight potentially profitable opportunities in the LDCs, which in 1996 attracted only 0.5 per cent of total foreign investment flows. ■

Secretary-General Kofi Annan has recently made several new high-level appointments in areas of importance to Africa.

UN / M. Grant

Ms. Louise Fréchette *(Canada), right, is the first Deputy Secretary-General of the UN, as of the end of February. Her responsibilities include helping to manage UN Secretariat operations and raising the UN profile and leadership in the social and economic sectors. At the time of her new appointment, Ms. Fréchette was Canada's Deputy Minister of National Defence.*

Mr. Kensaku Hogen *(Japan) has been designated Under-Secretary-General for Communications and Public Information. Mr. Hogen, whose new appointment takes effect in mid-March, was last Director-General of the Foreign Service Training Institute at Japan's Ministry of Foreign Affairs.*

UNHCR / A Hollmann

UN / E. Debebe

Mr. Sergio Vieira de Mello *(Brazil), far left, has been appointed as UN Emergency Relief Coordinator, with effect from January 1998. At the time of his new appointment Mr. Vieira de Mello was UN Assistant High Commissioner for Refugees.*

UN / M. Grant

Mr. Felix C. Downes-Thomas *(The Gambia), left, is now the Secretary-General's Representative in Liberia and head of the UN Peace-building Support Office in the country. Prior to this appointment, Mr. Downes-Thomas was Director of the Complex Emergency Division of the former Department of Humanitarian Affairs.*

Mr. Charles Dunbar *(US), right, is the Secretary-General's new Special Representative for Western Sahara. At the time of his appointment, Mr. Dunbar was President and Executive Officer of the Cleveland Council of World Affairs.*

UN

UN / M. Grant

Mr. Mohammed Sahnoun *(Algeria), right, has been named as the Secretary-General's Special Envoy in Africa. He served in 1997 as Joint United Nations/Organization of African Unity Special Representative for the Great Lakes Region.*

Mr. Berhanu Dinka *(Ethiopia), far right, formerly the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for Sierra Leone, is now the Secretary-General's Representative and Regional Humanitarian Advisor for the Great Lakes Region.*

UN / R. Da Silva

UN / J. Ehi

Other appointments:

Norway's former Prime Minister **Dr. Gro Harlem Brundtland**, *far left, has been elected as the next Director-General of the World Health Organization. Her term will begin in July 1998.*

Mr. Lansana Kouyaté *(Guinea), left, is the new Executive Secretary of the Economic Community of West African States. Mr. Kouyaté was formerly Assistant Secretary-General in the UN Department of Political Affairs.*

WORLD BANK

African leaders ask for greater say in aid use

Leaders from 12 African countries meeting in Kampala, Uganda, in January urged the World Bank to make the continent a top priority for the 21st century and to permit African countries greater say in how they use the aid they receive. According to sources close to the closed-door meeting, the heads of state of Botswana, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Mozambique, Rwanda, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe, as well as the South African vice-president, were critical of past World Bank policies. World Bank President James D. Wolfensohn, while acknowledging errors by the Bank, asked the African leaders to accept responsibility for their own mistakes as well. The World Bank president is expected to hold a similar meeting for countries in West Africa later this year. ■

EL NIÑO

UN task force to guard against disaster

With the El Niño weather phenomenon already bringing floods, drought, fires and other calamities to countries in Africa, Asia and Latin America, donors are gearing up to combat an especially widespread and complex natural disaster (see pages 1 and 6-7). To help both multilateral and bilateral donors better coordinate their responses, the UN has established an Inter-Agency Task Force on El Niño. It is headed by UN Emergency Relief Coordinator Sergio Vieira de Mello and includes the World Food Programme, Food and Agriculture Organization and more than a dozen other UN and international organizations, with coordination provided by the Geneva-based secretariat of the International Decade for Natural Disaster Reduction. One of the immediate aims of the Task Force is to exchange expertise and knowledge on El Niño, as well as to coordinate the development of strategies to counter its impact. ■

AFRICA RECOVERY

United Nations Office of Communications and Public Information Vol. 11 No. 4 March 1998

Agency heads to decide on best ways of moving forward

UN Special Initiative tackles Africa's challenges with renewed momentum

The UN Special Initiative places a major emphasis on human resource development. One priority area is basic education for all African children, with a focus on increasing the enrolment of girls.

By ***Nii K. Bentsi-Enchill***

Two years after its launch in March 1996, the UN System-wide Special Initiative on Africa (UNSIA) stands poised to consolidate the progress made in certain key areas, and to tackle the continuing challenges with renewed urgency and vigour.

Aiming to achieve tangible gains in more countries at a faster pace, senior officials of participating agencies have called for a tighter and more effective focus for the Initiative. They were speaking at a day-long meeting held in New York on 9 February to review progress on implementing the Initiative and to discuss the best ways of moving forward.

Participants said the Initiative would gain momentum and build broader support by making education, health, governance, information technology, and population and gender the top five priorities. Their proposals are for discussion at a 26 March meeting in Geneva of the UN system's highest internal policy-making body, the Administrative Committee on Coordination (ACC), which groups all heads of UN agencies. It has a Special Initiative steering committee co-chaired by Mr. James Gustave Speth, Administrator of the UN Development Programme (UNDP), and Mr. K.Y. Amoako, Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA).

The Special Initiative is a system-wide programme of concrete actions to help accelerate Africa's development in the decade to 2005. It is designed to rationalize and maximize the impact of UN assistance, including that of the Bretton Woods institutions, through more effective coordination at headquarters and at country level. The Initiative's mechanisms work to forge genuine and coherent partnerships to focus on priority areas already identified by African countries themselves, for example, in the Cairo Agenda for Action adopted by the 1995 Organization of African Unity (OAU) summit.

According to then Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali, the Initiative demonstrates the commitment of the entire international community to the development of a continent "that is for us a constant concern." Conceived to "give momentum to the positive political and economic trends in Africa," says Mr. Amoako, the Initiative was a response, adds Mr. Speth, to "the paradox" of declining foreign support at a time when Africa's prospects are "much brighter than they had been for many years."

Despite projections for the continent of an

turn to page 5

FEATURE ISSUE

UN System-wide Special Initiative on Africa

I think the Special Initiative on Africa must succeed. It is one of the best ways the UN has been able to devise to encourage the pooling of resources and effort by the UN and its agencies to have a greater impact on the ground and to be able to assist African countries. If we cannot successfully implement a scheme which is designed to put in proper structures, proper emphasis and proper organization to help Africans help themselves, then we will have a very long way to go. So I support the Initiative and I think we should all make it work.

— Kofi Annan
United Nations Secretary-General

UN

AFRICA RECOVERY

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UN Special Initiative tackles Africa's challenges with renewed momentum

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The Initiative promotes a better tomorrow for children through investment in education and health today.

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Correspondence should be addressed to:
The Editor, Africa Recovery
Room S-931, United Nations, New York 10017 USA
Tel: (212) 963-6857 Fax: (212) 963-4556 Fax/Modem: (212) 963-1193
e-mail: africa_recovery@un.org

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Editor
Salim Lone

Editor-in-Chief
Peter Mwaura

Managing Editor
Ni K. Bentsi-Enchill

Senior Writers
Margaret A. Novicki
Ernest Harsch

Editorial Assistant
Frehiwot Bekele

Production
Parvati McPheeters

Secretary
Alice Wairimu Kariuki

Our Internet address:
www.un.org/ecosocdev/geninfo/afrec

For further information on the UN Special Initiative

Please contact the Special Initiative Secretariat
New York: Tel. (212) 906-5930; Fax (212) 906-6958; e-mail <unsia@undp.org>
Addis Ababa: Tel. (251-1) 516667; Fax (251-1) 512233; e-mail <ecasia@un.org>
or Africa Recovery, UN Office of Communications and Public Information, Tel. (212) 963-6857; Fax (212) 963-4556;
or, in Africa, UN Resident Coordinators

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The Initiative: an opportunity for Africa

Effectiveness of external support is improving — K.Y. Amoako

The UN Special Initiative on Africa "is an opportunity not to be squandered," declares Mr. K.Y. Amoako, Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) and co-chair of the Initiative's steering committee. Among its virtues, he said in an interview with *Africa Recovery*, the Initiative provides practical and coordinated ways of implementing commitments made to Africa in past international conferences. It is important, Mr. Amoako adds, to put the Initiative in the context of Africa's improved economic performance and enhanced political environment, as seen in increased pluralism in government systems. The Initiative is but one of many ways that the donor community is trying to support these positive developments.

"The emerging consensus is that Africa needs external support to buttress the reform efforts under way," Mr. Amoako says. He notes that this consensus was demonstrated among other recent international conferences, at the 1997 Denver Summit of the Group of Seven, which recognized Africa's positive developments and pledged to open their markets to African exports and support its efforts to promote democracy and good governance. Similarly, the process of the Japanese-led Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) aims to support African countries' reforms, deepen international awareness of conditions in Africa, and foster South-South cooperation with Africa. The Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development recently published a paper, "Towards the 21st Century," which gives special attention to focusing development assistance in support of economic, social and political reforms in Africa.

Candidly acknowledging problems evident since the Initiative was launched in 1996, Mr. Amoako also emphasizes areas of progress towards its goals. These include education, from the outset the Initiative's biggest component (see pages 8-13); information technology, where ECA is bringing together African governments, donors and private firms (see pages 22-23); and governance (see pages 14-17). "A younger generation is asserting its commitment to growth and progress," says Mr. Amoako, adding that in the "surge towards political liberalization, the space for the participation of civil society organizations is widening and the role of the media is being encouraged."

Continuing challenges

But there is still much to do to improve perceptions and practices, within Africa as well as in the UN system. Mr. Amoako cites the murmurs in some quarters that the Initiative "was imposed by the UN system on Africa and that there was no real African ownership." Some also argued that it is "but one of the many failed initiatives on Africa," and "a replication of existing initiatives," namely the UN New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF).

Where we have well-developed programmes and strong government ownership at the country-level, additionality of resources and synergies under the Special Initiative are evident.

— K.Y. Amoako
ECA Executive Secretary and Special Initiative co-chair

With many countries in desperate need of development funds, Mr. Amoako thinks the misunderstanding that the Initiative is a "vehicle to transfer additional development resources" may persist. "Where we have well-developed programmes and strong government ownership at the country-level," he continues, "additionality of resources and synergies under the Special Initiative are evident." This, for instance, has been the case with the education sector in Ethiopia. Similarly, there is real potential for additional resource flows for good governance and information technologies, under the Initiative.

Spearheading coordination

A basic feature of the Initiative is to maximize, through much better coordination, the support the UN system gives to Africa. UN agencies are meant to "spearhead" a "more holistic perception of development efforts in Africa." But a "tendency for business as usual" has made it hard for some agencies to "internalize" Initiative goals and work programmes, says Mr. Amoako. "Even where we have committed agencies," he adds, collaboration has not been easy in some sectors, leading to slow progress on practical steps at the country level.

On the question of agency collaboration and "turf wars," Mr. Amoako argues that the issue is best resolved through progress in coordination and synergies. "In certain areas, such as governance and education, for instance, we are beginning to see progress," with the coordination in education between the World Bank and UNESCO considered exemplary. In each area of the Initiative, participating agencies have taken up leadership roles, "which were jointly agreed upon" at the outset, to define the scope and modality of assistance.

Mr. Amoako believes the misunderstanding about the relationship between the Initiative and UN-NADAF has been resolved. With coordination "improving all the time," the progress already recorded in some countries has shown that "the UN system as a group can work effectively under the Special Initiative umbrella."

He feels that African ownership will gain momentum as more concrete results are seen. Pointing out that the Initiative is a 10-year programme and not an event, he predicts that evidence of tangible progress "in at least a dozen countries within the coming year" will bring growing support for it.

There may be "a general lack of awareness of what the Special Initiative is really all about," but Mr. Amoako says the remedy is more effective communication. ECA has devised a strategy for outreach and advocacy to improve coordination between communications units of UN agencies and to publicize Initiative activities through various media – including enhanced outreach to opinion-makers in donor capitals – to foster "an informed dialogue on Africa's development challenges and achievements." The plans include better dissemination of flagship publications on Africa and development of an authoritative database on Africa housed at ECA's web site (http://www.un.org/Depts/eca). ■

Two years on, Initiative marks progress

Coordination and African ownership are key — James Gustave Speth

Although it is important to acknowledge that the UN System-wide Special Initiative on Africa continues to confront challenges to its implementation, it must also be recognized that progress has been made over the two years since it was launched, says Mr. James Gustave Speth, Administrator of the UN Development Programme (UNDP). "The UN system is sustaining its commitment," he told *Africa Recovery*, "and positive signs are emerging in programme formulation and implementation in many countries."

According to Mr. Speth, who is one of the Initiative's Steering Committee's two co-chairs, "The best illustrations of progress come from countries whose governments have hammered out clear policies and strategies, and from sectors where coordinating agencies have provided determined and creative leadership, especially in cluster activities." In those areas where the Initiative has registered the greatest achievements, he thus identifies two key underlying elements: greater coordination among Africa's external partners, and "ownership" of specific Special Initiative priorities by African governments themselves.

UN M. Grant

The Special Initiative represents the fulfillment of the goals and visions of the first UN Development Decade of the 1960s. It unites our strengths at every level, from that of the village to that of international governmental cooperation. And we cannot fail, because we cannot afford to fail.

— James Gustave Speth
UNDP Administrator and Special Initiative co-chair

'Uniting our strengths'

One of the prime motivations for launching the Special Initiative two years ago, notes Mr. Speth, was to rationalize UN system (including the Bretton Woods institutions) assistance to Africa. "This means coordinating effectively, acting synergistically, seizing opportunities for genuine partnership, building capacity at every level – in short, as the UN charter says, uniting our strengths."

While the Initiative has marked progress in a number of areas, including governance, health and information technology, Mr. Speth cites education as one sphere in which improved coordination has played a particularly strong role (see page 8). The World Bank's commitment to the Special Initiative and its collaboration with the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and other UN agencies have brought about greater "programme coherence," which in turn holds out "a promise of additional resources."

Beyond the role of such coordination in improving assistance from the multilateral institutions, it has also "spurred support by bilateral donors" for primary education in Senegal and Mozambique, Mr. Speth reports. France, in collaboration with UNESCO, UNDP and the World Bank, is helping overcome "policy impediments" in Senegal and the result will be greater resource flows through sector investment programmes. For Mozambique, a UNESCO-organized consultation on education generated bilateral support for government efforts to give higher priority to primary education within an overall development framework. Based on these experiences, Zimbabwe has asked the UN Resident Coordinator to liaise with UNESCO for a similar consultation on an education sector strategy.

To help better share such "best practices and approaches to problem-solving," Mr. Speth acknowledges that reliable and timely information must be disseminated. "It will be of tremendous value in building the credibility of the UN Special Initiative," he adds. "A common communication strategy is also critical to effective political mobilization, African ownership, donor support and internalization within the UN system."

Country-driven strategies

While donor coordination is vital, Mr. Speth stresses, it must be provided in support of programmes and strategies developed by Africans themselves. Through the Special Initiative, he says, "country-driven strategies should become the primary basis for donor assistance." The Initiative "is demand-driven, not donor imposed." He recalls that from its launch in 1996, the first goal of the Initiative has been "to help Africa help itself." African ownership of the Initiative has increased since it was launched two years ago, most notably in the support accorded to it by the June 1997 summit of African leaders. "In that decision," he notes, "the heads of state reaffirmed their ownership of the Special Initiative and undertook to ensure its fullest implementation."

Civil society support

Support from non-governmental and civil society organizations also is essential, Mr. Speth adds: "The Initiative will bring the results we hope for only if it is clearly owned, not only by African national authorities, but also by African civil society organizations. At stake is greater efficiency in development cooperation. This can happen only if the coordination function of the country itself is strengthened, based on internal capacity and broad consensus on development orientations through a participatory approach involving all stakeholders."

In a similar fashion, sustainable programmes for good governance cannot be imposed from the outside. "Let us be clear: there can be no conditionality in governance programmes," Mr. Speth affirms. "The way we approach governance in the context of the Initiative takes into consideration the weaknesses identified in the experience of development cooperation. National ownership and leadership are key in this approach." For this reason, the annual Africa Governance Forums are intended to promote wide participation leading to national consensus, and to build partnerships in funding national governance programmes (see page 14).

Mr. Speth adds that while "good governance is not conditionality," it nevertheless is "the best way to attract external partners, both public and private, and to ensure the positive and durable impact of the countries' own development efforts."

The Special Initiative, Mr. Speth concludes, "represents the fulfillment of the goals and visions of the first UN Development Decade of the 1960s. It unites our strengths at every level, from that of the village to that of international governmental cooperation. And we cannot fail, because we cannot afford to fail." ■

UNSIA overview

from page 1

overall rise in poverty and, in some areas, the damaging persistence of conflict, there are distinct grounds for optimism. Many governments are implementing economic policies backed by major donor countries and institutions, and democratic processes are gaining strength in several countries.

Emphasizing these points during the 1996 launch, World Bank President James Wolfensohn noted the "dramatic improvement" in some African countries. But the decline in official development aid and the low inflows of private capital were putting the "remarkable gains of some countries in serious danger." Joining such a multi-agency initiative was a first for the Bank, said Mr. Wolfensohn, and he was "enthusiastic" about the undertaking. Recognizing that the "fragmented approach of donors" had reduced their effectiveness, he expected that better coordination would help "to spend existing money better." Moreover, Africa needed "that assistance which can keep the momentum going." Accordingly, the World Bank has taken a leading role in mobilizing resources in the critical social sectors of education and health (see pages 8-13, 18-20).

Forward steps for the Initiative

Led by Mr. Speth and Mr. Amoako, participants at the 9 February New York meeting reviewed the Initiative's ambitious list of activities, the areas of progress and the nature of constraints.

The senior officials included Mr. Callisto Madavo, a World Bank Vice-President for Africa; Mr. Henri Lopes, UNESCO Deputy Director of External Relations; Ms. Thelma Awori, UNDP Assistant Administrator and Director, UNDP Africa; Mr. Abdoulie Janneh, UN Resident Coordinator in Ghana; Mr. Emmanuel Dierckx de Casterle, UN Resident Coordinator in Mozambique; and Mr. Alieu Sallah, former UN Resident Coordinator in Ethiopia. Also present were international development experts Mr. Edward V.K. Jaycox (ex-World Bank Vice-President for Africa) and Mr. Kwesi Botchwey (ex-Finance Minister of Ghana), both consultants to the Initiative.

Discussion topics ranged from political mobilization (in Africa, among donor countries, and within the UN system) to the benefits of an effective communications strategy. The participants recommended a concentration of efforts on education, health, governance, and information technology, as well as on bringing population and gender concerns into the mainstream of policies and programmes in all sectors.

But the officials also stressed that activity must continue – in some cases, actually begin – in the other components of the Initiative identified in 1996. Alongside international issues such as debt reduction, trade access and South-South cooperation, these components include conflict resolution and peace-building, developing water resources and achieving food security (see page 24).

Speakers agreed on the urgency of building strong partnerships based on clear African leadership of Initiative programmes. This domestic impetus in African countries would strengthen the "demand-driven" character of the Initiative. It would also encourage appropriate responses from the UN system which would focus better on providing coherent support at country level.

For all this to happen, there must be serious political mobilization, participants said. This should target national leadership in African

Special Initiative: highlights of progress

Since its launch two years ago, the Special Initiative has focused mainly on political mobilization, coordination and harmonization of UN system assistance in the priority areas, and promotion of African leadership of the effort. This has contributed to some progress on the ground in certain priority areas, including education, governance and information technology.

Education:

- Aiming for a 75 per cent primary school enrolment rate by 2000, **Senegal** has reached agreement on primary education goals and implementation strategies with the UN country team and the World Bank. This has led to the adoption of arrangements for coordinating donor backing for a medium-term primary education programme which Senegal is formulating (see pages 8-13).
- Discussions with the UN team in **Mozambique** led to a July 1997 consultation on education in Paris, organized by UNESCO, which generated bilateral support for Mozambique's efforts to place basic education firmly within an overall development framework. Primary education will be an important component in the country's presentation to a World Bank Consultative Group meeting later this year.
- **Zimbabwe** has requested a consultation on its education sector, similar to the one organized for Mozambique by UNESCO. It is also working with the UN country team on a strategy to strengthen the sector and on attracting donor support. This work is expected to lead to the formulation of an education programme similar to the one being developed by Senegal.
- **Fifteen countries** – Angola, Burkina Faso, Chad, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal and Somalia – have reached agreement with the World Bank and UNESCO, the Initiative's lead agencies in the education sector, on action plans to increase primary school enrolment.

Governance: ECA and UNDP, lead agencies for the governance component, have launched an annual series of Africa Governance Forums to facilitate the exchange of information and experience among governments and civil society organizations; to build partnerships; and to promote replication of "best practices." The first forum, held in Addis Ababa in June 1997, was attended by the governments of 14 countries, as well as representatives of civil society organizations and donors. Eventually, all sub-Saharan African countries are expected to participate in the series (see pages 14-17).

Information technology: ECA has launched the African Information Society Initiative and is encouraging African countries to draw up five-year programmes for information and communications infrastructure. Projects already implemented or under way include UNDP's Internet Initiative for Africa, a $6 mn project to improve connectivity in 12 countries and UNCTAD's TradePoints initiative for developing trade efficiency networks in Africa, for which the European Union has pledged $33 mn (see pages 22-23).

Country retreats: The Initiative emphasizes country-driven strategies as a basis for donor assistance. The basic method is for all UN agencies in a country to meet together, and with the government, in order to coordinate their programmes in general and to work out in detail how they will contribute in specific sectors. Such retreats in Ethiopia, Ghana, Mozambique and Togo have helped define ways of harmonizing programmes and implementation procedures.

countries as well as civil society organizations. But the Initiative also requires unequivocal support within the UN system, under the Secretary-General's leadership, the meeting agreed.

One immediate aim is to spur more UN country teams to improve their coordination, make their operations more coherent, and thereby achieve more effective action. It was noted that such coordination should also occur at sub-regional and regional levels to provide better support for Africa's inter-governmental bodies. As Mr. Amoako observes, ECA is "well positioned to bring a regional and sub-regional perspective to the Initiative," through its Sub-Regional Development Centres (SRDCs), by providing analysis and policy advocacy for country-level activities, and by nurturing implementation and monitoring.

The New York meeting also called for continued work on harmonizing the Special Initiative with other efforts such as Japan's second Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD II), the "Towards the 21st Century" programme of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the US' Africa Trade Initiative.

As Secretary-General Kofi Annan said in April 1997, "effectiveness of the Special Initiative will be judged in terms of its contribution to poverty-reduction, peace-building and stability in Africa."

Africans will know the Initiative is successful, said Ghanaian President Jerry Rawlings at the time of the launch, "when we see schools where there were no schools before, when we have health services where those services were not adequate before, when households have easy access to safe water, when there are enhanced work opportunities for the younger generation, and when we see donors supporting our plans in innovative ways."

The Initiative stresses the importance of African "ownership," and senior UN officials add that there can be no progress without commitment from African governments. This is why the Initiative emphasizes country-driven strategies as the primary basis for donor assistance. The basic method is for all UN agencies in a country to meet together and, with the government, coordinate their programmes in general and to work out in detail how they will contribute in specific sectors. Such retreats in Ethiopia, Ghana, Togo and Mozambique have helped define ways of harmonizing agency programmes and procedures.

Progress has been made in drawing up country programmes and securing donor assistance, most notably in the areas of education, health, governance, and information technology. Mr. Madavo acknowledges that "African ownership of the Initiative is not as strong as it should be," while Mr. Amoako feels that it will gain momentum as more concrete results are seen.

Such concerns arise from the skepticism with which the 1996 launch of the Initiative was greeted in some quarters. The reasons included the poor results of earlier programmes for Africa, notably, the 1986-90 UN Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development (UNPAAERD). Besides speculation about the political agenda behind the Special Initiative, there was also criticism over inadequate prior

Sound programmes will attract funding

"It is not always easy to coordinate and coordinate effectively within the UN system, and between the UN system and the Bretton Woods institutions," says Mr. Callisto Madavo, one of the World Bank's two Vice-Presidents for Africa. This is the first lesson after two years of the UN Special Initiative on Africa. The second is the continuing "challenge for us to find ways of coordinating effectively at the country level where the action takes place."

World Bank

Callisto Madavo, Vice-President for Africa, World Bank

Asked about the differences in nature between World Bank and UN operations, Mr. Madavo told *Africa Recovery* in a late February interview that "there is no conflict" between the Bank's lending-based operations and the Initiative. He says that "we can in fact align the lending that we are doing to support the core objectives of the Initiative."

Ethiopia, he says, is a good example of the Bank working with other donors to provide funding for sector investment programmes in education and health. The Special Initiative "is not just about money," he adds. "It is also about working upstream with countries to reform their policies, to prepare programmes."

Turning to African "ownership" of the Initiative, Mr. Madavo says it is "not as strong as it should be." When the Initiative was being put together, he adds, "we did not follow the kind of participatory approach that should have taken place. We did not talk to the Africans.... Africans could have fed in their own views, their own ideas and therefore felt a sense of ownership." He says, "We have to do a much better job of going out, reaching out to Africa and African countries and listening to them, talking about the Initiative. Even at this late hour we should cultivate and develop this ownership." He wants as many sub-Saharan countries in the Initiative "as can in fact be ready for it," but finds it "very difficult" to say how many countries will be covered during its 10-year span. He feels "very encouraged" by progress in such countries as Ethiopia, Zambia, Mozambique and Uganda, as well as by Senegal, Burkina Faso, Mali and Mauritania.

Calmly addressing the vexing question of resource mobilization, Mr. Madavo says it is "fairly obvious" in this early period that "for those countries that have sound programmes, we have not had difficulty raising money to support them." He cannot give a figure for resources raised so far, pointing out that fund-raising is linked to country-specific programmes, as in Ethiopia and Zimbabwe. But the Bank is confident that for sound programmes, "we will find the money." But he points out that the money raised externally is only "a fraction" of the money being used. "So to the extent that the Initiative encourages the preparation of sound programmes, it improves the effectiveness not just of the externally mobilized resources but the effectiveness of domestically mobilized resources as well."

The Initiative also makes it easier to mobilize resources, Mr. Madavo says, citing one original objective of ensuring that "we maintained the priority of African development on the world agenda." The result, he says, is the "tremendous interest" in Africa being seen today in the Group of Seven or Eight, and in the private sector. He says this "should enable us to raise the resources that are required much more easily than would otherwise be the case."

To make the Special Initiative more effective, Mr. Madavo firmly supports the proposal of the early February retreat of Initiative participants to refocus efforts on five core areas – education, health, information technology, governance, and population and gender. "If we want this Initiative to really show results, to have impact, we have to go with those things where we are making progress, where something is happening." Still, this re-focusing is not exclusive he points out, adding that continued efforts are needed in the other components of the Initiative.

World Bank - Josef Hastir

Food security is among the Special Initiative's components

consultation with African and donor governments before the launch and questions about the relationship between the Initiative and the UN New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF), which was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1991.

However, speaking from Addis Ababa during the launch, Ethiopian Prime Minister Meles Zenawi expressed great optimism about the Initiative because it is "firmly based on priorities for development that we in Africa have identified for ourselves." He noted the widespread frustration in Africa over "unmet promises and unfulfilled commitments," but pointed to innovative aspects of the Initiative "which are designed to make the development partnership more effective and resource mobilization more practicable and achievable." In a signal of high-level commitment, the June 1997 OAU summit in Harare, Zimbabwe, urged member states "to implement the Initiative by assuming, in a concerted manner, their share of responsibility."

Resource mobilization

Another issue was that of resources. The Initiative was launched with a price tag of $25 bn over its 10-year time frame, producing high expectations of additional resources. But from where, some people asked, would this average $2.5 bn a year come, at a time when donors were slashing their aid? The sensible answer given at the time was that most of the funds would have to come from efficient reallocation of existing resources, mainly at domestic level, but also from existing commitments of bilateral and multilateral aid. The overall goal was to rationalize development aid and maximize its impact.

Greater aid effectiveness, in turn, makes it possible to raise some additional resources from donors, and the Initiative provides basic mechanisms for mobilizing such resources. This has already occurred in some countries that have drawn up coherent sector programmes – for example, in education in Ethiopia and Mozambique – that have gained donor backing.

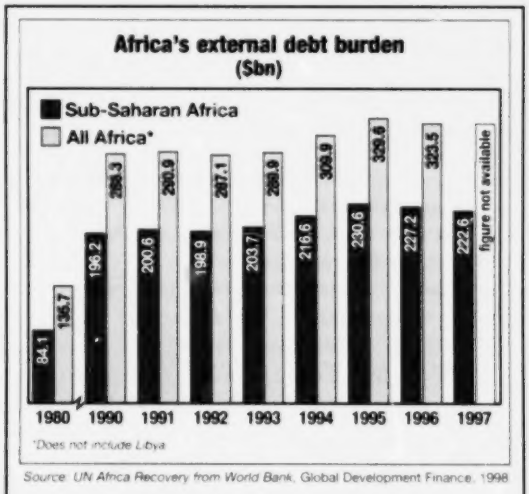
Towards consolidation

The effort needed to allay misconceptions about the Initiative took some time, but senior UN officials say that African missions to the UN are now more supportive. A landmark in the political effort was the agreement reached last year in the high-level UN Committee for Programme Coordination (CPC) that the Initiative is indeed the implementation mechanism of UN-NADAF. This was later ratified by a 1997 resolution of the General Assembly. The CPC also called for the inclusion of economic diversification and regional cooperation and integration among the priorities of the Initiative. The World Bank has again confirmed that well-conceived programmes in priority areas are more likely to secure funding. One welcome development since late 1996 is the inclusion of the Initiative on the agenda of the Special Programme of Assistance for Africa (SPA), which the Bank leads. This is seen as an opportunity to track the progress of donor contributions to priority sectors at country level. To this end, a report will be presented to the June 1998 SPA meeting.

During the Dakar launch of the Initiative in 1996, Senegalese President Abdou Diouf urged "our friends within the UN" to ensure that the Initiative is not "yet another initiative, but the start of a new era in multilateral cooperation and a source of inspiration for a new partnership in development."

According to some observers, the commitment of UN agencies themselves to the Special Initiative has been "somewhat uneven" and the synergy expected to result from the collective efforts of the UN system has also been described as "elusive."

In discussing how to move forward at a faster pace within the UN system, participants at the 9 February meeting in New York decided to develop a system of realistic monitoring and evaluation of progress. This would require a more readily and regularly available flow of information among participating agencies, as recommended in the communications strategy. The 26 March meeting in Geneva on the Special Initiative is expected to debate all these issues and make further recommendations as the Initiative moves into its third year. ■



Source: UN Africa Recovery from World Bank, Global Development Finance, 1998

Facilitating deeper debt reduction is among the aims of the Special Initiative. In 1996, the World Bank and the IMF, the lead agencies in this area, launched the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative, which so far has considered the cases of seven countries, five of which are African. Uganda was the first country to receive an HIPC debt relief package; Burkina Faso has followed suit, with Côte d'Ivoire and Mozambique expected to sign deals soon. Three other African countries (Mali, Senegal and Togo) are in line for review in coming months.

Boosting basic education in Africa

Special Initiative seeks to reverse declining enrolment

By ***Margaret A. Novicki***

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Education

While school enrolment has expanded dramatically over the past 40 years in most of the developing world, this has not been the case in many African countries. Unable to stem the steep downward enrolment trends that became manifest in the economic crisis years of the 1980s, these countries in the late 1990s have disturbing educational profiles: only half of their children are going to primary school, adult literacy rates are below 40 per cent, and over 50 per cent of women are illiterate. Such a profile has grave implications for Africa's development. "Only through education," President Abdou Diouf of Senegal told an October 1997 meeting of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA), "will the continent and its sons and daughters be able to meet the demands and challenges of the 21st century."

As a first step toward a long-term solution to the continent's education problems, the UN System-wide Special Initiative on Africa is placing a major emphasis on facilitating basic education for all African children over a 10-year period. It has identified 15 countries with enrolment rates of less than 50 per cent (Angola, Burkina Faso, Chad, Djibouti, Eritrea, Ethiopia, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Liberia, Mali, Mozambique, Niger, Rwanda, Senegal and Somalia) as the targets of its initial focus. In these countries, enrolment of boys ranges from 23 to 49 per cent, but of girls, from only 13 to 31 per cent.

Action plans are being prepared for each country, analyzing the fundamental constraints on expanding access to basic education. The lead agencies of the Initiative's education component – the World Bank and the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) – along with the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) and the UN Development Programme (UNDP) as cooperating agencies, will then help the countries prepare sector investment programmes (SIPs) with ambitious targets for progress toward universal primary education. The countries will also be supported in efforts to mobilize resources for the implementation of these programmes.

The Special Initiative is also working at the sub-regional level to identify the major impediments to achieving basic education for all. Workshops on constraints, such as the financing of teachers' salaries (see page 13) and languages of instruction, are being organized with a view to devising sustainable solutions.

Impediments to progress

The objectives of the Special Initiative's education component are directly linked to the outcome of the 1990 World Conference on Education for All, held in Jomtien, Thailand. There, countries pledged to take the necessary steps to provide primary education for all children and to massively reduce adult illiteracy. While the record since Jomtien has been uneven across sub-Saharan Africa, the region in fact had made faster progress over the 1960s and 1970s in increasing primary enrolment than Asia and Latin America, tripling the number of children in primary school.

UNICEF/ Chris Anderson

The gender gap in education remains wide, with female literacy rates well below those of males in most sub-Saharan African countries.

But this progress was reversed in the 1980s under the weight of structural adjustment. Net and gross enrolment ratios fell to such an extent that in 1992, only about half of sub-Saharan Africa's primary school-age population was in school. According to a study

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prepared by Professor Christopher Colclough of the University of Sussex for the ADEA meeting in Dakar last October, a majority of sub-Saharan African countries – "uniquely among developing nations" – now have a smaller proportion of their children in school than they did in 1980.

A majority of sub-Saharan African countries, uniquely among developing nations, now have a smaller proportion of their children in school than they did in 1980.

"If you don't have educated people, you cannot develop," says Mr. Henri Lopes, UNESCO's Deputy Director-General for External Relations. "Basic education is necessary even to make progress in such areas as health and population."

Among the myriad problems plaguing education in Africa is the low quality of schooling in much of the region, with overly large class sizes and the average number of students per teacher higher than in any other world region except South Asia. "Teachers are often unqualified, teaching aids are few and textbook provision is desperately poor," says Professor Colclough. As a result, learning achievement is low. There are unequal opportunities for rural children and the urban poor, and the gender gap yawns ever wider, with female literacy rates of below 30 per cent in 19 sub-Saharan countries.

In an interview with *Africa Recovery*, Mr. Mamadou Ndoye, Senegal's deputy minister for basic education and national languages, also pointed to financial constraints. "In today's context of structural adjustment, insufficient material and financial resources" have had a "very severe impact" on improving basic education. He added that the cost of the educational model which Senegal inherited from the French "has not been adjusted to our resources." And given the rate of population growth, schools have been adapted neither to the demand for education, nor to the needs of developing societies, Mr. Ndoye commented.

But according to Mr. Jean-Louis Sarbib, World Bank Vice-President for Africa (see box), inefficient use of existing resources is more of a problem than an absolute shortage of funds. External partners will never be able to supply more than 10 to 15 per cent of the education budget in any country, he told *Africa Recovery*:

"It is clear the needs in the education field in Africa are enormous, but it is also clear that [resources] need to come from the countries themselves," he said. "For a very long time, African

World Bank sees benefits from partnership on education

The UN System-wide Special Initiative on Africa, says Mr. Jean-Louis Sarbib, one of the World Bank's two Vice-Presidents for Africa, is "one of the new breed of partnerships that are essential for getting more out of the resources we all have to help Africa." Mr. Sarbib told *Africa Recovery* that after some initial questions about resource mobilization, the agencies on the ground and the Bretton Woods institutions got together and decided "who could bring what to the table." There is now "nice agreement" in this regard and "real synergy" emerging between UNESCO, UNICEF and the Bank on education. "We see this as a very important component of how we need to work," he said.

Mr. Sarbib notes that with regard to education, the Initiative provides "a forum where we can talk to UNICEF, UNESCO and other UN agencies" so that as countries move toward sector investment programmes, they are "much more in the driver's seat." The Initiative also builds on comparative advantages, he says, allowing each agency or institution to bring its particular expertise to the table.

The Bank has suffered from a misperception that it is focusing only on basic education and is "de-skilling" Africa by not investing in secondary or tertiary education, Mr. Sarbib argues. This is not the case: the Bank is taking a "holistic" approach to improving education, encompassing primary, secondary and tertiary education as well as adult literacy and education for girls and women. Given Africa's literacy rates, basic education is a priority for the Bank, says Mr. Sarbib, but "you will not have teachers unless you have ways of producing teachers."

Photo: World Bank

Jean-Louis Sarbib, Vice-President for Africa, World Bank

What is important is how resources are distributed among the varying demands. He says analysis of education spending in Africa shows that a very small number of people who go to university receive an inordinate share, leaving millions of children with little or no educational opportunities. Tertiary education should be cost-efficient and produce a work force that can help Africa compete in the world economy. Otherwise it can become "a huge hole" into which governments pour resources to the detriment of other education levels.

According to Mr. Sarbib, donors need jointly to help countries use their resources efficiently. The Bank is helping countries to draw up investment programmes which span the entire education sector from primary to tertiary and to decide on how best to allocate their resources within that framework.

Financing problems faced by African countries can be resolved, he says, by looking at the spectrum of potential resources – the ability and willingness of parents to contribute, the ability of the government to mobilize and liberate funds for education, and the willingness of donors to give. The private sector is also getting increasingly involved in secondary and tertiary education in Africa.

The Bank will always remain the lender of "last resort," Mr. Sarbib says. It has already invested some $400-600 mn in education in Africa and plans to invest another $300-400 mn in 27 to 30 projects over the next three years.

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governments have been saying education is a priority. Yet their budgets were in such disarray that they were not able to allocate the resources to education."

Better performance and better management of African economies as a whole means that more resources can be devoted to education and health than has been the case in the past, Mr. Sarbib argued. Absorptive capacities have to improve, and in terms of gaining better budgetary allocations for education, it helps if the ministries of finance and education become "allies." There is also a widely acknowledged need for greater donor coordination and for African government "ownership" of educational development, said Mr. Richard Sack, executive secretary of the Paris-based ADEA. Founded in 1988 as Donors to African Education, ADEA now is led by a steering committee of 10 African education ministers and 18 donor agency representatives.

"The best way of working together to improve education is under the eyes and impetus" of African ministers of education, said Mr. Sack. ADEA has been working to foster a process which empowers African ministries of education and strengthens the policy dialogue with donors to gain agreement on the need for country-led coordination of donor assistance.

Better performance and management of African economies means that more resources can be devoted to education and health than has been the case in the past.

Mr. Sack noted there has been an evolution in African governments' approach to basic education. In the past, he said, "politicians didn't have a lot of incentive" to favour basic education because "primary school students don't riot if you cut their scholarships." But such views have changed in the post-Jomtien period, helped by a "professionalization" of the ministerial corps and the priority placed on the sector by donors. The ADEA mechanism, which has been used for "real live coordination" among donors, has provided a useful forum for the Special Initiative on Africa to present and mobilize support for its education component from African ministers.

As the lead agencies of the Initiative's education component, the World Bank and UNESCO are working with other external partners on helping African countries achieve a consensus on the reforms required to boost low enrolment rates by defining the major constraints on basic education.

Sector investment programmes under way

The Initiative is also working to identify what kinds of support can be provided by donors to help develop sustainable sector investment programmes (SIPs) at the country level. Alongside a special $7 mn trust fund set up by Norway to support the formulation of SIPs, the Bank has allocated resources under its administrative budget for this purpose and UNDP is also providing support.

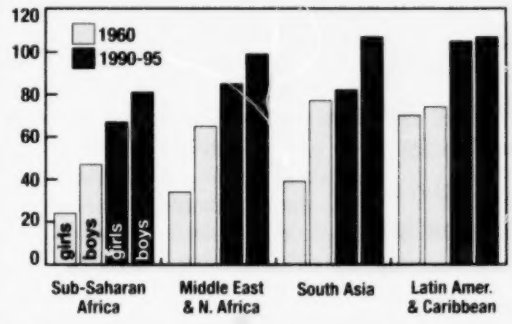
Salvador Salgado

Lack of resources has hampered expansion of primary education.

Several countries, meanwhile, are moving ahead with formulation of education SIPs.

- Ethiopia launched an Education Sector Development Programme in 1997/98 with assistance from UNESCO and the World Bank in the Special Initiative framework. With strong government leadership a critical ingredient, the country was able to earmark 74 per cent of the $1.3 bn needed to finance the SIP, and 15 multilateral and bilateral donors contributed $500 mn to complete it.
- Through its lead agencies and UNDP, the Special Initiative helped the government of Senegal to prepare a 10-year programme for basic education. A Consultative Group meeting of donors is scheduled for April 1998 to mobilize resources for the SIP.
- In Mozambique, a five-year national education strategy is under preparation, as well as a SIP financing plan. A donor consultation meeting was held in July 1997 (see box, page 12).
- Zimbabwe's government has requested UNESCO and the UN country team to help organize a consultative meeting on education similar to that held for Mozambique.
- Burkina Faso's preparation of a 10-year plan for basic educa-

Primary education enrolment ratio
(gross; %)*



* *The gross enrolment ratio is the number of children enrolled in a school level, regardless of age, as a percentage of the total number of children in the age group which officially corresponds to that level.*

Source: *UN Africa Recovery from UNICEF, The State of the World's Children, 1998.*

tion began in January 1997. The Initiative is helping support a policy dialogue to resolve issues of sustainability and the budgetary implications of teacher recruitment.

Education SIPs are also under way or in preparation in Guinea, Ghana, Mauritius, and Malawi.

Partnerships needed

In addition to encouraging national leadership and a coordinated donor approach, stronger partnerships with "all the key players" – including parents, students, civil society and teachers unions – need to be built in support of education, says Mr. Armoogum Parsuramen, former Minister of Education of Mauritius and now an education policy specialist and basic education coordinator of the Initiative for the World Bank.

Representatives of these groups and ministries of education and finance took part in a workshop organized by the Bank within the framework of the Special Initiative in January in Dakar, Senegal, on the financing of primary teachers' salaries – an issue identified as one of the key constraints to improving basic education (see page 13).

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Other future sub-regional workshops will focus on:

- the role of teachers' unions (to be organized with Education Internationale in Ouagadougou, Burkina Faso, in March);
- the role of parent-teacher organizations (to be organized with the Regional Federation of Pupil-Teacher Associations in the first half of 1998);
- language of instruction in primary schools, to sensitize policy-

Girls' education — a priority of the Special Initiative

The UN Special Initiative on Africa stresses the need to improve opportunities for those most likely to be deprived of education – in particular girls and women. Nineteen sub-Saharan African countries have female literacy rates below 30 per cent and less than half of 6-11 year old girls are estimated to be in school. These negative trends persist, despite the overwhelming evidence that investing in female education has a high return – in greater earning ability for families, reduced fertility and infant mortality, and increased levels of public health.

UNESCO, UNICEF and the World Bank are all actively working to promote greater access to education for girls. One interesting effort is collaboration with the Forum of African Women Educationalists (FAWE), a pan-African non-governmental organization based in Nairobi, Kenya. Dr. Mamphele Ramphele, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Cape Town, led a FAWE delegation for a meeting with the World Bank in January. She explained that FAWE is "a statement made by African women about their determination to have women drawn into policy development, implementation and evaluation at the national and international levels."

She said, "Africa has failed to develop in the way it could have, given the resources directed at it, because it left out an important sector. FAWE is tackling a major constraint to development; our mission is to ensure that women and girls are an integral part of the intellectual and technical resource base of Africa."

The idea for FAWE came from five African women education ministers who came together in the early 1990s with shared views on the poor status of female education in Africa and the slow progress towards the goal of education for all children. They agreed that to achieve universal education, political commitment was necessary. But equally important was the process of identifying obstacles to female participation and developing solutions. After gaining the support of 19 other senior women policy-makers in education, FAWE was launched in 1992.

Today, FAWE is working through 31 national chapters across the continent in advocacy and information dissemination on female education, strategic resource planning, and strengthening female leadership at the tertiary level. It also provides small grants for innovative pilot initiatives in female education.

Dr. Eddah Gachukia of Kenya, FAWE's executive director, said the organization today is "a strong force to move education policy forward and to reach beyond advocacy to ensure expanded access for all to education." World Bank Vice-President Jean-Louis Sarbib agrees. "Since 1992, FAWE has done a lot to sensitize from inside Africa the male ministries of education about the importance of girls' education and to achieve partnerships for the effective use of resources. That is no small accomplishment."

makers on the positive impact of using national languages;
- the content of primary education, addressing how it can be made relevant to the majority of children who do not go beyond primary education and also equip those who go on to secondary schools with the necessary skills;
- curriculum development for basic education, to examine content, pedagogical method and use of local languages in Burkina Faso, Mali, Guinea, and Senegal;
- girls' education, to promote their enrolment and completion of school; and
- adult education/literacy, to identify successful programmes and develop prototypes to be tested in Burkina Faso, Chad, Ethiopia and Mozambique.

"Under the joint leadership of the World Bank and UNESCO," says Mr. K.Y. Amoako, Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa and one of the co-chairs of the Initiative steering committee, "substantial progress and synergy" have been demonstrated in the education component of the Initiative. UN system agencies agree, however, that the real test of the Initiative's impact is on the ground, at the country level.

Substantial progress and synergy have been demonstrated in the Special Initiative's education component, but the real test of its impact is on the ground, at the country level.

Commenting on his own country's experience, Minister Ndoye of Senegal said, "We never shared the views of those who looked at the Initiative with pessimism or skepticism, and wondered where the resources would come from. We rather asked what we could make of this opportunity provided by the UN to mobilize people around the priority of basic education. And that is what we tried to do, to take the ideas at the root of the Initiative – a strong mobilization behind the development of education, and donor coordination – and see how they could be applied in support of our own nationally defined policies."

"Donors had a habit of defining our priorities for us, but more and more we have achieved a better sharing of roles and responsibilities," Mr. Ndoye said.

This is a key point, adds Mr. Parsuramen. "We cannot substitute for national leadership – we can only work as full-fledged partners. The challenge is for the governments to take the lead and get it done, and the UN Special Initiative on Africa can be considered a good opportunity for that." ■

Mozambique plans to have every child in school by 2006

Mozambique, which emerged from a destructive civil war only six years ago, is drawing up a strategy under the UN System-wide Special Initiative on Africa to achieve universal primary education by 2006 from an enrolment of just 50 per cent today. The World Bank and UNESCO are teaming up with bilateral donors and other UN agencies to provide technical support and other resources.

With 2.2 million children of primary school age, Mozambique's strategy aims at increasing enrolment to 86 per cent in five years and to 100 per cent during the 10-year Special Initiative. According to UNDP Resident Representative Emmanuel Dierckx de Casterle, about 66 per cent of school-age boys and 33 per cent of the girls are actually in school today in a country where most schools – up to 80 per cent in some areas – were destroyed during the 17-year civil war.

After the war ended in 1992, Mozambique had to resettle more than 4 million displaced people before it could concentrate on economic reconstruction. Many Mozambicans had little access to basic education or health. The goal of universal education seemed hopeless, Mr. de Casterle said, in light of other pressing problems, such as repairing all types of infrastructure.

When Mr. de Casterle arrived in Maputo in 1996 – the year of the Special Initiative's launching – he set about establishing a dialogue with the government, African ambassadors and donor countries. He soon discovered that Mozambique could utilize the Initiative particularly for the education and health sectors, which are critical to the country's rehabilitation. A series of discussions and contacts with the relevant ministers followed.

The ministers took the Initiative "very seriously," but had reservations about committing Mozambique, already 60-70 per cent reliant on foreign aid, to further dependency, Mr. de Casterle told *Africa Recovery*. However, the UN country team helped to resolve a number of problems and produce a strategy tailored to the specific needs of Mozambique. At one particular meeting, the government, the UN team and representatives of donor countries examined how best to harmonize their various programmes.

Resource mobilization efforts in the country led to a consultation on education, organized by UNESCO and held in Paris in July 1997, that generated bilateral support for government efforts to place primary education firmly within a framework for overall development. The results were excellent, commented Mr. de Casterle, who accompanied the government team to Paris. Mozambique is now working with a coalition of UN agencies and donor countries to finalize strategies for curriculum review, girls' education, distance learning, and other reforms and innovations to enable more children – particularly girls – to go to school. The government has also increased its budgetary allocation for education by 27 per cent.

The Mozambican experience has inspired the authorities in neighbouring Zimbabwe to request the UN Resident Coordinator to liaise with UNESCO towards a similar consultation on their education sector strategy.

— Peter Mwaura and John Nyamu

Enrolment to rise in the Sahel

Financing of teachers' salaries is a key constraint

By ***Peter Masebu***

Representatives from seven Sahelian countries – Burkina Faso, Guinea, Guinea-Bissau, Chad, Mali, Niger and Senegal – met in Dakar, Senegal, from 18-21 January to exchange ideas on ways to reverse declining or stagnating trends in primary school enrolment, focusing on the recruitment and training of teachers and financing of their salaries.

The World Bank-sponsored workshop was among the first of a series of subregional activities planned within the education component of the UN Special Initiative on Africa to address constraints on achieving universal primary education.

According to Mr. Birger Fredriksen, the World Bank's Africa Regional Technical Director for Human Resources, these countries were targeted because school enrolment has remained virtually unchanged for the past 15 years. This is a dangerous situation, warned Mr. Fredriksen, because "no country has been able to develop with a majority of its population illiterate."

Mr. Djimangar Dadnadji, Chad's director-general at the Ministry of National Education, said his country faces an uphill task unless a decisive break is made with an educational system in which the state funds everything from teachers' salaries to housing and school materials.

'Home-generated' ideas

Mr. Dadnadji attributed Chad's increased enrolment rate to "spontaneous schools" created voluntarily by civil servants who fled the war in Ndjamena to the rural areas. The schools are staffed by "community teachers" paid by parents' contributions.

Expressing the Bank's frustration that enrolment is not rising in spite of substantial donor assistance, Mr. Fredriksen said, "We have difficulty in countries with low enrolment like Mali, which has had rates of around 30-35 per cent since the 1970s. We have come to a stage where we cannot lend them any more money because they cannot afford to recruit the teachers that they need to put into the classrooms." It is not the Bank's role to finance the recruitment of primary school teachers, he said.

In an interview, the UNESCO Director for Basic Education, Ms. Aïcha Bah Diallo, a former minister in Guinea, expressed optimism that the situation will change under the UN Special Initiative on Africa, which coincides with the launching of the African Education Decade by African leaders. "Under the Special Initiative, it is African governments themselves that will specify their needs. Donors will only accompany them with financial or technical support. What was wrong in the past was that they were told 'do this'," she said.

A positive sign, Ms. Diallo noted, is "home-generated" ideas by several Sahelian countries to increase the number of primary school teachers by tapping the growing reservoir of jobless graduates, reallocating civil servants to teaching and transferring teachers from secondary to primary schools.

The UN Initiative's success will depend on basic education becoming an affair of all stakeholders, said Mr. Armoogum Parsuramen, the World Bank's education policy specialist. "That's why we tried to bring several categories of people to this meeting – trade unionists, parents' associations and others," said the former Mauritian education minister.

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The involvement of the African Federation of Pupils and Students' Parents (FAPE) was one example at the Dakar workshop. FAPE, which has branches in 13 francophone countries, suggested the creation of a fund for the development of education and training, stressing that since an educated populace is of benefit to the entire society, contributions should come from all sectors, including parents, governments and private business. ■

Classroom in Burkina Faso: several countries are struggling to raise resources for recruiting and training more teachers.

UNICEF

Making good governance a reality

Beyond consensus on principles, Africans move toward concrete reforms

By **Ernest Harsch**

Many African countries have taken important steps in recent years to improve their governance, but further concrete measures are needed to enhance the prospects for sustainable development, participants agreed at the first annual Africa Governance Forum, held in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, on 11-12 July 1997. "In Africa, as elsewhere in the world, good governance fosters social and economic progress, which, in turn, helps sustain good governance," Mr. K.Y. Amoako, Executive Secretary of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), told the gathering, summarizing the "underlying philosophy" of the UN System-wide Special Initiative on Africa. While emphasizing the sharing of experiences among the 14 African countries that presented official reports on their governance programmes, the forum also promoted dialogue with representatives from donor, UN and other international partners.

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Over past decades, Africans have paid a high price for the absence of good governance in many parts of the continent, UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan pointed out in his message to the forum. But today, he said, "We are witnessing ... a new wave of progress in Africa, based on peace, democracy, human rights and sustainable development. Together, these four principles form the pillars of good governance." And they must rest on a popular mandate, he added. "The will of the people must be the basis of governmental authority in Africa, and governments, duly elected, must not be overthrown by force. That is the foundation of democracy. That is the foundation of good governance."

Co-sponsored by the ECA and the UN Development Programme (UNDP), the forum was held within the context of the Special Initiative, whose governance component focuses on three areas: expanding capacities for transparent, responsible and effective governance; strengthening the role of civil society in development, including peace-building; and bolstering the capacity of the Organization of African Unity (OAU) for peace-building, conflict resolution and national reconciliation. UNDP and ECA, which are the lead agencies for this component of the Special Initiative, have been seeking to generate more resources and better coordinate UN and other international assistance for good governance programmes in Africa.

Issues of government capacity and effectiveness have been a concern in Africa for some time. Senegalese President Abdou Diouf noted at a November 1996 international symposium held in Dakar, Senegal. But it has been only in recent years that a "virtually organic link" has been recognized between good governance and sustainable development. He hailed the UN Special Initiative,

Civil society empowerment plays a critical role

Running like a thread through many of the national reports presented to the July 1997 Africa Governance Forum was the centrality of civil society empowerment. Swaziland's governance programme, for example, aims to facilitate a new constitutional arrangement that incorporates the empowerment of civil society, social integration and the efficient management of public resources. Ghana stressed its commitment to promoting the involvement of civil society in the development process, using participatory and bottom-up approaches; its decentralization policy provides for the devolution of power and resources to local authorities and their communities.

A few weeks before the forum, some 40 non-governmental and civil society organizations (NGOs/CSOs) from around the continent, including women's, grassroots and labour organizations, as well as churches, research institutes and policy advocacy groups, attended a two-day consultation on governance in Addis Ababa. They drafted, debated and approved a statement which stressed that good governance is a process by which "governments and people together" identify shared values, needs and challenges, set priorities and develop programmes to address them. The statement suggested ways to strengthen good governance in Africa, with special emphases on gender equity and partnerships with civil society.

The statement was presented to the governance forum, and several of the NGO and CSO representatives attended and contributed their views. Recognizing the importance of furthering NGO and CSO involvement in such governance discussions, and in implementation of the UN Special Initiative more generally, it was decided that for the second governance forum in Accra, a number of NGOs/CSOs would be invited directly.

Speaking at a November 1996 symposium in Dakar, Senegalese President Abdou Diouf stressed that any governance programme must seek to strength civil society, an "emerging economic and political actor" in Africa. "Its eruption onto the social and political field is a fact which all strategies of good governance must take into account," he said.

One of the most crucial questions, ECA Executive Secretary K.Y. Amoako argued at a December 1997 conference on democracy, civil society and governance, is "whether civil society in Africa is equipped to play the key role in bringing about good governance that is expected." Whatever shortcomings it may currently have, he added, it is nevertheless clear that "civil society is booming in Africa, and is already having an impact on democracy and governance. This positive role needs to be strengthened."

launched in March of that year, for according good governance a "prominent place among its priority preoccupations for assuring the continent's development."

Although the first forum in Addis Ababa covered a wide range of governance topics — including decentralization, civil society empowerment, human rights, electoral and judicial reform, and public administration — participants recommended that the subsequent annual forums focus more tightly on selected issues. The second forum, expected to take place in Accra, Ghana, in June, therefore will concentrate on accountability and transparency in government and public service.

African countries are entitled to determine the application of democratic government on the basis... of their specific realities.

— Salim Ahmed Salim
OAU Secretary-General

Consensus and ownership

Many governance issues were considered "taboo" in much of Africa until recently, UNDP Administrator James Gustave Speth observed at the Addis Ababa forum. But with the wave of democratization, which in a number of countries replaced military and one-party regimes with multi-party systems and increased the influence of civil organizations, these issues now can be discussed more openly. Even more, as the deliberations at the forum highlighted, a broad consensus about the main elements of good governance has been forged. Among other aspects, there was agreement among forum participants that:

- sustainable human development requires the participation of all economic actors, including the state, business community and civil society;
- empowerment of civil society is a guarantee for effective government partnership;
- economic progress and good governance go hand-in-hand;
- gender equity and women's empowerment are essential ingredients of good governance;
- the military should protect constitutionality, rather than fostering instability;
- human rights and other constitutional guarantees are essential to guard against arbitrary power and a "winner-take-all" syndrome;
- mechanisms that build on history, culture and indigenous traditions are vital for democratization and good governance; and
- donors should better coordinate their country programmes and provide aid in a way that builds partnership, rather than imposing a particular set of governance mechanisms.

But general agreement on how to achieve good governance has been slower to emerge. Specifically on democracy, for example, "The issue now in Africa is not whether to democratize, but how, how soon and in what form," Mr. Amoako observed at a 1 December 1997 conference on "Democracy, Civil Society and Governance in Africa," also held in Addis Ababa.

During the Africa Governance Forum last July, a lively debate took place on governance and conditionality, the practice whereby donors insist on specific measures in exchange for their aid. Many African participants stressed the importance of African "ownership" of governance programmes. "Our African countries," said OAU Secretary-General Salim Ahmed Salim, "are entitled to determine the application of democratic government on the basis of their socio-cultural values, taking into account their specific realities.... While there are universal values which are the common heritage of humanity, there are no ready-made recipes for democracy and governance. Each society should generate its home-grown modalities for forging ahead in democracy."

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In similar terms, Mr. Amoako said at the December conference that governance reforms "cannot be imported wholesale.... To be effective, they must become a 'lived' experience rather than a 'received' experience. Only in this way will the reform process earn sustained commitment and effective political leadership."

National ownership of governance programmes is also a key goal of the Special Initiative. That is one reason why the Initiative's governance component, unlike other international approaches to this issue, focuses less on broad principles than on concrete ways to transform those principles into programmes, policies and actions, based on African countries' own national experiences and on active participation from civil society organizations.

Trade union meeting in Kenya: stronger civil society organizations contribute to better governance in Africa.

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National programmes

The main sessions of the forum were devoted to considering the national programmes and experiences of 14 countries: Botswana, Cameroon, Ethiopia, Ghana, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritius, Mozambique, Senegal, South Africa, Swaziland, Togo and Uganda (another 22 African countries sent observers, but did not present reports). Several main themes emerged from the deliberations.

Ghana, Mali, Senegal, South Africa and Uganda placed a particular emphasis on the importance of decentralization and local government institutions, with the aim of bringing state administration closer to the people. South Africa's new constitution, following its transition from apartheid minority rule, provides for three distinct but interdependent spheres of government: national, provincial and local. There are mechanisms for airing differences over policy issues among the three spheres, as well as for building up the capacities of provincial and local government authorities.

Uganda's constitution sharply reduces the power of central government appointees in the districts and gives local councils enhanced legal status and discretionary control over recurrent and development budget funds, with the additional role of facilitating community and private sector involvement in the planning and delivery of services. Uganda's report emphasized that this course was designed to overcome some of the common weaknesses of "decentralization" policies in Africa, which often lead simply to greater penetration by central government power into local affairs or allow a shedding of responsibilities without a commensurate transfer of resources or powers.

UN / P. Sudhakaran

Electoral and parliamentary reforms are central elements of Mozambique's post-war national reconstruction efforts.

Several countries, including Ethiopia and Mozambique, discussed the importance of pursuing electoral and parliamentary reforms, beyond the establishment of multiparty electoral systems, to ensure more extensive and effective political activity among the population. In Mozambique, this process is linked to national reconstruction following a long and debilitating civil war, featuring both expanded social programmes and efforts to instill greater trust and solidarity among the people.

In Ethiopia, which has adopted a federal structure, the political system provides not only for multiparty elections at the national level, but also for local and regional councils "defined on the basis of nationality." There was a consensus among participants, however, that it is critical to ensure that decentralization does not reinforce ethnic divisions.

Constitutional and judicial reforms and the protection of human rights also figured as major concerns in a number of reports, including those of Malawi and Madagascar. Botswana, which has a longer experience with democratic governance than most other African countries, pointed to the constructive use of traditional institutions and practices, such as its own *kgotla* consultative assemblies, and to the importance of an independent judiciary, competent civil service and autonomous auditor-general's office.

Among other issues, Cameroon, Togo and Mauritius emphasized modernization of public administration, especially for socio-economic management. To achieve sustainable human development, Senegal stressed, the government needs a modern public administration governed by rules of efficiency and productivity, so that it can promote private sector development and provide high-quality services.

Focus on accountability

During the first African Governance Forum in Addis Ababa, representatives of non-governmental and civil society organizations, as well as countries that could claim successful experience with good governance practices, argued for focusing more specifically on issues of accountability and transparency. Accordingly, the second forum in Accra will feature that theme as the sole agenda item.

UNDP defines accountability as the ability to hold public officials and their representatives to a standard of conduct that is clearly in the public interest. This requires rules of conduct that are transparent, straightforward and broadly accepted in society, as well as administrative and legal processes to discipline or remove officials who do not respect such rules.

Weak accountability mechanisms, Senegal's President Diouf noted at the symposium in Dakar, tend to facilitate corruption and other abuses of office and thereby undermine governance more generally. While arguing that African leaders must shoulder

responsibility for corruption in the continent and "take necessary measures against illicit enrichment," he also stressed that corruption is a global phenomenon. Actions that foster and promote corruption, for example by multinational corporations and other entities in the industrialized countries, also must be curbed.

Strengthening partnerships

Within the context of the UN Special Initiative on Africa, both UNDP and ECA have been seeking to better target and coordinate their work on governance. UNDP currently devotes 39 per cent of its resources to governance issues, with the bulk going to Africa. It has established a Special Initiative on Governance in Africa, which supports capacity-building for governments and civil society, building on past and ongoing governance efforts. The ECA places particular emphasis on strengthening the organizational, institutional and networking capacity of African NGOs/CSOs; fostering dialogue between governments and CSOs; building CSOs' capacity for conflict prevention, peace-building and the promotion of democratic pluralism; and supporting sub-regional conflict-management centres.

In line with the Special Initiative's emphasis on achieving synergies with other organizations and efforts, these lead agencies of the Initiative's governance component have been seeking a more healthy collaboration and effective coordination with the World Bank, Global Coalition for Africa, OAU, Commonwealth Secretariat and others pursuing governance programmes in Africa.

UNDP, for example, has identified civil service reform and capacity-building assessments as two areas of collaboration with the World Bank. Switzerland has agreed to support the second Africa Governance Forum in Accra, and UNDP is seeking closer partnership with the European Commission's governance programme in Africa. UNDP also has agreed to a request by the Paris-based Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) to take the lead in coordinating a participatory development and good governance exercise in Mauritania, in preparation for a workshop on effective partnerships for governance slated to take place in Mali in April 1998.

To provide donor institutions with more comprehensive information about existing governance activities in Africa – and to help African countries better share experiences among themselves – UNDP is compiling a compendium of governance programmes in the continent. The inventory will begin with the 14 countries that presented reports to the first Africa Governance Forum in Addis Ababa. ■

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Peace-building through communications

Greater access to information and improved communication among different sectors of the population are vital for building a culture of peace in Africa, argues the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). Within the framework of the UN System-wide Special Initiative on Africa, UNESCO is playing the lead role in a "Communications for Peace-building" project which aims to use various communications media to disseminate relevant information and education. The five-year, $8 mn project, which is expected to be launched this year, will focus initially on a dozen African countries that are in the midst of conflict, are trying to recover from the legacy of recent conflict, or are experiencing serious tensions that may lead to conflict.

For peace to prevail, strategies must be developed to address the causes of conflict, said Ms. Josephine Ouédraogo, Director of the UN Economic Commission for Africa's African Centre for Women, at a 23-25 June 1997 regional consultative meeting in Addis Ababa on the project. Any programme for peace, she added, must include three components: shared economic development, confidence building in the political system, and education for mutual understanding.

Mr. Mamadi Condé, Director of the UNESCO office in Addis Ababa, noted that while his agency was already promoting the role of communications in peace-building, the Special Initiative's innovation was to pursue an integrated approach, drawing on the experiences of a wide range of organizations. Participating in the meeting, for example, were not only UN agencies and the World Bank, but also the Union of National Radio and Television Organizations of Africa, the West African Journalists' Association, and several African media institutes and non-governmental organizations.

Radio is the most widespread communications medium in Africa.

UNESCO has observed that while the causes of conflict are numerous – including economic and social disparities, differences over governance or problems of identity or religion – these often are exacerbated by insufficient information, education, knowledge of others' cultures, or awareness of basic rights and responsibilities. The Communications for Peace-building project aims to help lessen such shortcomings by strengthening the skills and technical capacities of independent and public-service media institutions, especially in rural communities, to better provide their audiences with news and information related to peace, tolerance, gender equality, good governance and respect for human rights.

Because newspapers and magazines generally have a small and largely urban-based readership, radio is currently the most widespread and useful modern medium for social and political development in Africa. While the project will also target other media, it will place a special emphasis on supporting radio broadcasting. Using participatory approaches, messages and programmes will be produced locally, addressing issues mainly selected and elaborated by media professionals in the project countries.

Target: a stronger health sector

Special Initiative gives priority to preventive and primary care

By **John Nyamu**

Africa's health problems remain a major obstacle to the continent's development. But the Special Initiative's multi-sectoral approach gives African countries new impetus to strengthen their health systems as an important part of an overall remedy for the interconnected ills afflicting the region. The Initiative aims to expand Africa's primary health facilities, with a particular emphasis on combatting the most debilitating illnesses: malaria, sexually transmitted diseases (including HIV/AIDS), tuberculosis and the major childhood diseases.

The lead agencies for the health component of the Special Initiative are the World Health Organization (WHO) and the World Bank, which are expected to help African countries mobilize the resources they need to carry out health sector reforms over the Initiative's 10-year period. The UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) is also deeply involved in strengthening preventive health care. But whatever assistance these international institutions and other donors may provide, notes Dr. Tayo Lambo of WHO's Africa regional office, "we do not implement the Special Initiative in New York, not even in Brazzaville, where we had a regional office. Implementation and the effects of implementation will only be seen at the country level."

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Due to severe constraints on public spending in Africa, expenditure in the health sector rarely exceeds an average of 5 per cent of gross domestic product, or $10 per person per year, and is more likely to be allocated to salaries and to curative services in urban hospitals than to preventive and primary care. In many countries, more than 50 per cent of the population has no access to health facilities, 51 per cent has no access to safe drinking water and 56 per cent lacks sanitation – services that could prevent the spread of some diseases.

According to a 1997 World Bank progress report, some $3.5 bn is being mobilized to support health sector development in 10 countries. More than half of this total will come from the countries themselves, with the donor community mobilizing the remaining $1.5 bn, of which about $500 mn will provided by the World Bank. Presenting the report to WHO's African Regional Committee of health ministers last September, Dr. A. Edward Elmendorf, the World Bank's lead health specialist for Africa, said the report's main message is that "if countries come forward with credible programmes, prepared in consultation with their external partners, filling the external financial requirements is not a problem."

The 10 countries are among 15 considered by the World Bank as being "positioned to execute the type of reform programmes outlined in the Initiative." The 15 – Benin, Ethiopia, Ghana, Guinea-Bissau, Lesotho, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Mozambique, Niger, Senegal, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and

With few funds, WHO combats African maladies

Africa's most basic health problem is a lack of money, says Dr. Ebrahim Samba, Director of the Africa office of the UN's World Health Organization (WHO). "We need to invest in our health," he told *Africa Recovery*. "We need to invest in the education of the people, the training of technicians and specialists."

Dr. Samba believes that some of the necessary resources can be mobilized through harder work and greater discipline by Africans themselves. Yet additional financing also must come from the United Nations, World Bank and other donors, he argues forcefully, expressing disappointment with the results obtained so far by the UN System-wide Special Initiative on Africa. But whatever the constraints, Dr. Samba affirms his office's commitment to helping African countries tackle their most debilitating diseases and other health problems.

Malaria, for example, kills some 2 million Africans every year, making it the continent's biggest single health problem. Important progress has been registered in recent years, Dr. Samba notes, through the expanded use of bed nets impregnated with repellents against malaria-carrying mosquitoes, better training for community healthy practitioners and increased collaboration with pharmaceutical companies to invest in research towards an anti-malaria vaccine.

Ebrahim Samba, WHO Africa region Director

But malaria remains a major killer, as African governments struggle with high population growth rates, rapidly expanding urban concentrations and devalued currencies that make it more difficult to purchase imported medicines and supplies. "The fundamental problem is a lack of financial resources," Dr. Samba says, noting that there has been a decline in international funding for research in tropical medicine in general. Africa's poverty means that the continent remains a very marginal market for the major pharmaceutical companies, which generally make research decisions on the basis of projected profits.

Given such financial handicaps, African ministers of health, meeting in Brazzaville in 1996 following the launch of the UN Special Initiative, felt that the Initiative's emphasis on such basic sec-

This article is based on an interview with Dr. Samba conducted in early February 1998 by ***Olu Sarr*** *in Dakar, Senegal.*

UN / E. Debebe

Countries with sound health sector programmes will elicit a more favourable donor response

Zimbabwe – all have either ongoing World Bank-sponsored sector investment programmes (SIPs) or are in the process of preparing one. The Bank deems most other African countries as currently lacking "readiness" for such sector-wide programmes, because of macroeconomic or institutional difficulties, certain major health sector issues that must be addressed before a SIP is feasible, or civil strife.

However, Dr. Ebrahim Samba, Director of WHO's Africa regional office (see box, below), believes that the Special Initiative should not limit its activities to those countries that are in a better position to carry through sector-wide programmes. "We should on the contrary select the poorest countries," he told *Africa Recovery*, "the countries that are not qualified for sector investment programmes."

National efforts

The Initiative's implementing agencies, Mr. Alieu Sallah, Deputy Assistant Administrator of the UN Development Programme (UNDP) Africa bureau, told *Africa Recovery*, must play an advocacy role within their respective sectors. "The idea is not for the Special Initiative to generate resources to supplement the budgets of UN agencies, but to support African government programmes in governance, water, health and education," he said.

Ethiopia gets high praise from Mr. Sallah for its commitment to the Special Initiative goals. According to Mr. Sallah – until recently UNDP Resident Representative in that country – what is exemplary about Ethiopia is the emphasis on national ownership of the reform process. The government already had prepared its programme for the health sector and was ready to use the forum of a World Bank-chaired donors' Consultative Group meeting to seek support. So impressed were the donors that in late 1996 they pledged $2.5 bn for Ethiopia's programmes (including in the health sector), although the government had sought only $2 bn. Mr. Sallah said that the best feature of Ethiopia's health sector reform is the

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tors as health and education was "a good idea," Dr. Samba explains. But they expressed some skepticism that it would yield significantly greater resources. Two years later, he confesses that "we felt rather disappointed" that the emphasis has been on finding money for health mainly through "recycling, reorganization, increased efficiency and all that," rather than raising additional external resources.

World Bank Vice-President Callisto Madavo acknowledges that coordination with WHO in carrying out the Special Initiative's health component has not progressed as well as it should, especially in comparison with education, where there has been close collaboration with UNESCO (see pages 8-13). Some $500,000 was raised in the context of the Special Initiative this February for a series of workshops in Africa to explore ways to make health sector collaboration more effective, an amount Dr. Samba considers highly inadequate, but which Mr. Madavo sees as a beginning, as "seed money" to start moving forward.

The WHO Africa office has programmes in a variety of critical areas, Dr. Samba notes, such as malaria, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and health sector reform, and will continue to pursue them even with inadequate resources. However, he adds, more "value added" from the Special Initiative would make it possible to "do them better and quicker."

Meanwhile, Africa itself must do more. "Africa is not poor," Dr. Samba declares. "Africa has very rich resources. What we need to do is to put our shoulders to the wheel" of economic development.

While greater investment in training, treatment, research and other aspects of health care is vital, Dr. Samba insists that improving the health of Africa's people also requires a broad perspective. "Health is not disease, it's more than disease," he observes. "Health is water, food, sanitation, good governance, peace, security. These are all health determinants. You cannot have health in isolation; health is just part of development. The way European health improved was not because of doctors and hospitals. It was because of the Industrial Revolution: people earned more, people were better educated, people took care of their health."

In Africa as well, Dr. Samba affirms, "We can do it. Africans are not stupid. We have to work harder. We have to be more transparent. We have to have better governance. We have to be economically competitive." In particular, Africa needs more "honest, hardworking leaders" at all levels, "whether it is in the state, in the school, in the hospital, wherever." Rather than taking jobs abroad, African professionals should stay home, or return if they have left. "If we have a critical mass of people dedicated, disciplined to work for Africa, Africa will make it."

government's effort to provide health facilities across the country, an effort launched before the Special Initiative began. It is expected that by June this year, the facilities will be completed, equipped and operational.

In Mozambique, the government's national health strategy serves as a framework for all donor contributions and is the basis on which a five-year rolling investment programme has been developed. The estimated cost for the period 1996-2000 is $356 mn, of which the government plans to provide $116.5 mn, according to the World Bank progress report. The programme is structured so that the country assumes an increasing share of financing, although external support is likely to be necessary to sustain health and other services for some years after this period.

Donor pooling arrangements have been set up in Mozambique for technical assistance, pharmaceuticals, medical supplies and infrastructure, with a pool for training under discussion. According to Mr. Emmanuel Dierckx de Casterle, UNDP Resident Representative in Mozambique, the government has rebuilt the infrastructure, half of which was destroyed during the civil war that ended in 1992. However, the full 10-year period of the Special Initiative will be needed to establish new buildings, systems and drug production facilities, as well as to train more quality health personnel, in a country where the population has doubled since independence in 1975.

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A focus on children

The impact of weak preventive health care is felt most severely by Africa's children, who continue to fall ill or die most often from preventable and/or treatable afflictions – acute respiratory infections, diarrhoea, malaria and measles – in addition to protein-energy and micronutrient malnutrition. Accordingly, the UN Children's Fund (UNICEF) is one of the cooperating agencies of the Special Initiative's health component.

UNICEF was one of the first UN bodies to put money – about $500,000 a year since 1996 – into Zambia's "Basket Fund," which supports the implementation of a "minimum package of essential health services at the district level," says Dr. Kasa A. Pangu, Senior Health Adviser to UNICEF. In Ghana, UNICEF and other agencies are involved in an "Aid Donor Pool Account" programme to ensure that their pooled contributions benefit government-defined priority programmes for children and women. These include immunization campaigns against measles, polio and pertussis (whooping cough), as well as efforts to reduce infant, under-five and maternal mortality. UNICEF has set aside $400,000 for this programme, which begins this year.

UNICEF / John Isaac

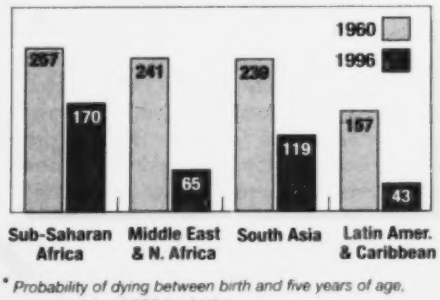
The impact of weak preventive health care is felt most severely by Africa's children.

UNICEF is concerned, however, that the Special Initiative seems to give low priority to multi-sector problems, Dr. Pangu said. While health issues are seen only through the Ministry of Health, others like nutrition are not confined to a single sector and there is no single "cross-cutting" agency that can tackle them. "We are very interested in the community level, which is our main focus, so we want to ensure that things are going on at that level in terms of capacity and skills," said Dr. Pangu.

According to Dr. Lambo of WHO, an initiative known as Integrated Management of Childhood Diseases provides for children attending clinics to be examined for an entire range of ailments instead of simply the one afflicting the child. "Right now," he told *Africa Recovery*, "I think about 10 or 12 countries are really implementing the initiative."

While malaria remains Africa's major cause of death and incapacitation, says Dr. Lambo, its negative impact on development is being surpassed by that of HIV/AIDS. By killing men and women in their most productive years – the ages 15 to 45 – the disease is taking a devastating toll on households and the national economy. However, over the past five years, progress has been made in introducing epidemiological surveillance systems, and in slowing the spread of HIV in some communities by successful prevention campaigns. ■

Under-5 mortality rate*



* *Probability of dying between birth and five years of age, expressed per 1,000 live births*

Source: *UN Africa Recovery* from UNICEF, The State of the World's Children, 1998

People: the agents of development

The Special Initiative recognizes the central role of population and gender

"Population issues involve more than just numbers," says Dr. Nafis Sadik. They involve planning for existing people and for those as yet unborn. "We have to plan for their needs in education, in health, and in all sectors of development," she told *Africa Recovery* in early March.

This is why Dr. Sadik, Executive Director of the UN Population Fund (UNFPA), strongly supports the social sector focus of the UN System-wide Special Initiative on Africa, as well as the inter-agency collaboration the Initiative requires.

UNFPA

Nafis Sadik, Executive Director, UNFPA

She is firmly behind the proposal of the 9 February meeting in New York of senior agency officials (see page 1) to make population one of the five primary clusters of activity within the broad framework of the Special Initiative. As the lead agency for population issues, and a participant in the education and health sectors, UNFPA's task is to ensure the full integration of population and gender considerations in all areas of the Initiative.

Giving an example of the coordination the Initiative promotes, Dr. Sadik said she had just reached a new agreement with the World Bank for it to play a much stronger advocacy role on gender issues in its overall policy dialogue with governments.

Africa the highest priority

UNFPA has declared Africa to be its highest priority area, says Dr. Sadik, and has increased funding allocations for its work there by 40 per cent over the last 10 years. It plans further increases to keep pace with local absorptive capacity.

The agency is moving ahead with the Programme of Action in Africa, drawn up to help countries move towards the goals set by the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) held in Cairo in 1994. These include include far better access to reproductive health care, a central concern for women.

In this context, UNFPA reports that 19 African governments have adopted comprehensive population policies and others are in the process of doing so. Examples include Botswana, Côte d'Ivoire, Mozambique, Namibia, Togo and Zimbabwe, where with UNFPA support governments established new national policies in 1997 and set up institutional structures for implementation. Kenya, Lesotho, Rwanda, Uganda and Zambia are working towards revising their population policy to incorporate ICPD recommendations. Swaziland and Angola are also working on their population policies and a time frame for implementation.

According to Dr. Sadik, UNFPA is very active in raising the profile of population and gender considerations in country-level efforts to implement the Special Initiative, particularly in the health and education sectors. UNFPA representatives take part in meetings of UN country teams to coordinate their programmes, providing input for investment and reform programmes in the health and education sectors. They are also working together to develop common situation analyses or compile baseline data for the Initiative's objectives. In Mozambique, for example, UNFPA helped ensure that demographic and reproductive health issues were factors in the analysis of social and economic conditions. And in Cameroon, UNFPA is involved in developing a database for important social indicators.

UNFPA is also helping countries to collect gender disaggregated data for planning, monitoring and evaluation. For example, UNFPA has helped Cameroon, Eritrea, Malawi, Mali, Mozambique and Tanzania to mobilize resources towards a census. And in 1996, UNFPA also helped with demographic health surveys in Botswana, Cape Verde, Chad, Eritrea, Rwanda and Senegal.

focus on

Population

Through such activities, says Dr. Sadik, UNFPA is advancing the goals of the Special Initiative. By making population and gender issues a factor in their policy-making, African countries will be better able to tailor their resource mobilization and allocation to their most fundamental development needs, Dr. Sadik observes. ■

UN photo

Progress on population and gender issues will spur Africa's development.

Africa connects to the Internet

Special Initiative spurs projects to link up the continent's computers

By **Peter Mwaura**

Over the past five years, the number of African countries with access to the Internet has risen dramatically and today there are more than 30 international development assistance programmes promoting wider access to information and communication networks in Africa, a trend that the UN System-wide Special Initiative on Africa seeks to accelerate even more.

UNDP Ruth Massey

Improved Internet access can provide Africa with vast amounts of information vital to its development.

In 1993 only four African countries were connected to the Internet. Today, most have developed some form of Internet access: among them, 44 have full access in their capital cities; nine also have local Internet service providers (ISPs) in some secondary towns; and eight have local dial-up access nationwide. There are only five countries – Comoros, the Republic of Congo (Brazzaville), Eritrea, Libya and Somalia – that currently do not have plans for full Internet access.

focus on

Information

One of the most important events to help speed up Internet connectivity in Africa was the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) Conference of African ministers responsible for social and economic development and planning which, in May 1996, approved the framework for an African Information Society Initiative (AISI). Supported by ECA in collaboration with UNESCO, the International Telecommunications Union (ITU) and Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), the AISI charts Africa's path into cyberspace.

The AISI was followed by the African Network Initiative (ANI), a study on future information-structure building activities in Africa, which identified planned or ongoing projects on the continent. Many of these – there were more than 50 as of February 1998 – fall under the AISI framework. Among the major ones are:

- UNESCO's Regional Informatics Network for Africa extension, which supports the provision of training and computer equipment in 22 African countries.
- The ITU programme for Africa comprising various rural, community telecommunications centres, health and satellite projects conducted in cooperation with UNESCO, IDRC, the World Health Organization (WHO) and others. The programme includes pilot "telemedicine" projects in Cameroon, Mozambique, Tanzania and Uganda, in cooperation with the European Telemedicine Group.
- IDRC's Acacia programme to develop the use of information and communication technologies in African communities.
- The UN Conference on Trade and Development's TradePoints initiative for developing trade efficiency networks in Africa. The European Union has pledged $33 mn for the project.
- A multi-donor InfoDev fund being established by the World Bank. The Bank is also providing support for linking 1,200 public schools in developing countries to the Internet. Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, Mali, Mauritania, Mozambique, Senegal, South Africa and Uganda have been earmarked to receive support.
- The UNDP Africa bureau's $6 mn Internet Initiative for Africa, a project to improve connectivity in 12 countries.
- The US Agency for International Development's AfricaLink project which will fund equipment, training and some communication costs to connect about 100 African institutions to local e-mail service providers.
- The UN Environment Programme's Mercure project, to establish an environmental information exchange network in Africa.

Despite these ongoing projects, Internet use in Africa is limited by hardware and transmission costs. Hardware is much more expensive in Africa than in many other parts of the world due to high import tariffs and little price competition. However, Internet charges are expected to drop owing, among other things, to increasing competition in transmission technologies among ISPs, the privatization of state-owned telecommunications corporations and the liberalization of domestic telephone markets. ■

For an African 'information society'

Initiative seeks information technology access for every African

By **Kenneth Blackman**

It was no mean challenge that a group of experts took up when they met on 20-21 October 1997 at the Addis Ababa headquarters of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). Their job was to help push forward the effort to use information and communication technology to spur African development.

The meeting was the first encounter of the African Technical Advisory Committee, set up by ECA Executive Secretary K.Y. Amoako to guide the implementation of the African Information Society Initiative (AISI). Based on a partnership between multilateral, bilateral, governmental, non-governmental and private sector bodies, the AISI was launched at a conference held on 13-15 May 1996, in Midrand, South Africa.

But its story really began in Addis Ababa when the ECA, the International Telecommunications Union (ITU), UNESCO and Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) organized the first African Regional Symposium on Telematics for Development in April 1995. Discussions were taken a step further in May 1995 by the 21st ECA Conference of Ministers, and by May 1996 an action framework drawn up by an ECA-appointed working group of 11 information technology experts had been approved by the 22nd Conference of Ministers.

The AISI framework urges African countries to draw up five-year programmes for information and communication infrastructure as part of their national development plans. It also places a high priority on achieving full Internet connectivity throughout the continent, bringing access to information to distant and disadvantaged communities, with content developed by Africans and relevant to Africa. The AISI seeks to ensure that by the year 2010, "every man and woman, school child, village, government office and business [in Africa] can access information and knowledge resources through computers and telecommunications," according to ECA.

Is all this possible on a continent where many people have no access to telephones, and where communications on the whole are often difficult? AISI advocates do not deny the limitations, but refuse to see the situation as static. "It's very ambitious because there are many things that restrict the development of communication infrastructure," admits Ms. Karima Bounemra Ben-Soltane, Director of the ECA's Development Information Services Division, which is responsible for the AISI. "Our aim is the intelligent use of systems, mastering techniques, the transfer of knowledge and know-how," she told *Africa Recovery*.

focus on

Information

The progress of the AISI will depend to some extent on financing. The African Technical Advisory Committee recommends that the pool of potential funders should be broadened, and also calls for stronger relations with institutions already supporting the initiative, such as the UN Development Programme (UNDP), ITU and the World Bank.

Much of the work done within the AISI framework thus far has taken the form of building awareness and helping states prepare their information and communication policies, strategies and plans. This has been the focus of workshops supported by AISI partners such as the ECA, UNDP and IDRC. Improving access to information and communication technology in Africa remains a major challenge. ■

Telecommunications infrastructure a key

All national stakeholders should be involved in the liberalization of Africa's telecommunications sector, according to participants at a seminar on the Internet for East African countries held at the UN Economic Commission for Africa (ECA) in Addis Ababa. They also recommended the establishment of a rural development fund for the provision of incentives to encourage Internet service providers to develop information infrastructure in rural and remote areas.

"The role of information in the development process cannot be overemphasized," ECA Executive Secretary K.Y. Amoako told the 13-15 October 1997 meeting. "And it becomes more crucial when it comes to economic integration and networking, where decision-makers need to have access to accurate and timely information to enable them to make wise and appropriate decisions."

Past experience has shown that unavailable, unreliable and/or outdated information is a major impediment to development, noted Mr. Christian Lehembre, acting UN Development Programme (UNDP) Resident Representative in Ethiopia. "Countries that choose to invest in improving their telecommunications infrastructure are likely to outpace those that do not," he told the seminar.

But improving such infrastructure "goes beyond simply adding more telephone lines or enhancing the capability of the local and international networks," stated Mr. Lehembre. "More importantly," he said, "it means that most countries have to reform their regulations concerning telecommunications, reconfigure the tariff structure, allow competition from the private sector, and generally provide an enabling environment to take advantage of the inevitable telecommunications boom."

The participants recommended that the Africa Information Society Initiative should be implemented at the country level, "mainly through the organization of high-level policy awareness campaigns and the development of national information and communication policies and plans."

What is the UN System-wide Special Initiative on Africa?

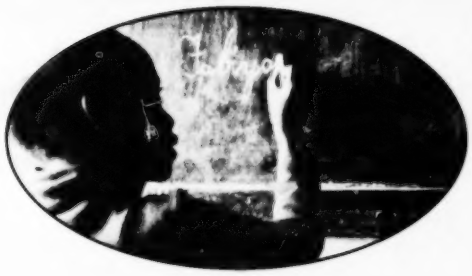
The Special Initiative on Africa is a 10-year programme of concrete actions to accelerate development in priority areas already identified by African countries. It was launched on 15 March 1996 by the UN Secretary-General, the Chairman of the Organization of African Unity, the World Bank President, the Presidents of Ghana and Senegal, the Vice-President of Kenya and UN agency heads. The Initiative is the implementation vehicle for the UN New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s (UN-NADAF).

The Initiative aims to enable Africans to take charge of the development process, to maximize support for Africa's development efforts, and to improve donor coordination and increase aid effectiveness.

While the Initiative has numerous priorities, a re-focus on five is now being proposed: expanding basic **education** and **health** care, promoting better **governance**, harnessing **information technology**, and fully integrating **population** concerns into all aspects of development, with a special emphasis on women's full participation. Activity in the other priority areas would continue.

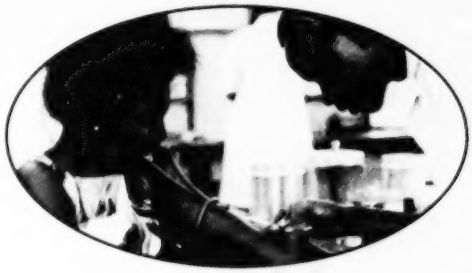
For each component of the Initiative, a UN agency (or agencies) is responsible for resource mobilization and coordinating implementation. The lead agencies are accountable for ensuring progress in each component. African governments are responsible for local implementation.

Pillars of the Special Initiative



1

Education: *a major objective of the Initiative is to help Africa attain universal basic education, which is considered the best possible development investment.*



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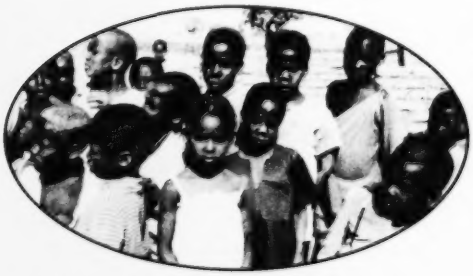
Health: *broader access to health services, and improved resource mobilization, management and allocation in all countries are key elements in the health sector component of the Initiative.*

3

Governance: *the Initiative promotes transparent, accountable and efficient governance. This includes strengthening democratic institutions and civil society, and building peace.*

4

Information technology: *the Initiative is working to increase access to telecommunications and the Internet in order to harness the vast power of information for Africa's development.*



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Population and gender: *bringing these crucial elements of sustainable development to the heart of economic and social policy-making is a priority of the Special Initiative.*

Other priorities of the Special Initiative include:
resource mobilization; debt relief; trade access; South-South cooperation; peace building and conflict resolution; development of water resources; food security; land degradation and desertification control; poverty reduction and sustainable livelihoods.

Photo credits: 1) UNICEF / Betty Press; 2) UN; 3) UN / Milton Grant; 4) UNDP / Danielle B. Hayes; 5) UNDP / Ruth Massey

Participating agencies:

Food and Agriculture Organization
International Fund for Agricultural Development
International Labour Organization
International Monetary Fund
International Telecommunications Union
UN Children's Fund
UN Conference on Trade and Development
UN Department for Economic and Social Affairs
UN Development Fund for Women
UN Development Programme
UN Economic Commission for Africa
UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization
UN Environment Programme
UN High Commissioner for Human Rights
UN High Commissioner for Refugees
UN Industrial Development Organization
UN Population Fund
Universal Postal Union
World Bank
World Food Programme
World Health Organization
World Meteorology Organization
World Trade Organization